

jeevadhara

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH

Edited by
Samuel Rayan

PROCESSED

NOV 24 1993

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ISSN 0970 - 1125

Vol. XXIII No. 135

jeevadhara

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Edited by

Samuel Rayan

Jeevadhara

Kottayam - 686 027

Kerala, India

Tel. (0091)0481. 7430

JEEVADHARA

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

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Editorial

The case studied from various angles in the several contributions here is the Thomas Christian Church of Keralam. But the concern is wider, and has to do with all the Jesus communities across the world. Hence there are some general reflections too which do not directly refer to Keralam. The concern is for the Face of Jesus seeking to shine in the face of each church; the concern is for authentic churches with authentic structures of life, service and worship. Authentic means indigenous and free and born of the Faith lived locally in as deep an engagement as possible with the people and people's sufferings, struggles, hopes and celebrations. Authentic means incarnate in the reality of the people's experience and culture. Authentic means autonomous, creative and innovative, open and growing like a tree, while remaining rooted, also like a tree, in the Grace and Truth that visited us and touched us in Jesus Christ.

All the reflections argue, each in its own way, for authenticity, autonomy and creativity. All stand for an adult catholicity consisting in the communion of free and equal local churches responsible to one another, and to Christ. All seem to agree with G. K. Chesterton that to be real is to be local, which is a good way of saying that universals are abstractions. The case studies therefore can have relevance in many places the world over and in numerous local situations. Concern for the true face and voice of each church is timely, even imperative in an hour when vigorous attempts are on at overcentralisation and total control of the thousands of local churches of the world.

God meets us in Jesus. God would have mercy, not sacrifice. God meets us in the life and history of Jesus born in a stable in Bethlehem and done to death under Pontius Pilate. We encounter God in our own history, too, of suffering and struggle. We encounter God in the dispossessed and the out-cast with whom Jesus identified himself. Far more vital therefore than rituals and church laws are mercy and justice and fidelity.

What indeed is worship in Spirit and in Truth? — authentic worship which God acknowledges and which is independent of priestcraft and temple buildings in Jerusalem or Gerizim or Ayodhya?

Samuel Rayan

Beyond the Cult of the Dead God

This brief, prophetic word insists that God encounters us in our history, in the problems of our country today. Authentic faith and worship consist in responding to these challenges by promoting and celebrating life and love, and working to defeat death and its minions. Meaningful, beautiful ritual and cult will emerge if the believing community will "first seek God's kingdom and God's justice".

All religious experience is ambivalent. It can either blossom into the cult of the living God or degenerate into the cult of the dead God. Why so? Because the Absolute can reveal itself only in the relative, the Ultimate only in the proximate, the Unconditioned only in the conditioned. The Divine can unveil its face to us only in the here and the now, only in place and time, only in the earth we inhabit and in the history we share. In other words, we can have access to the Divine only through the world we are and the world we make. There is no short-cut to the Divine that bypasses the contextuality of time and space. In this sense the Divine is always enfleshed.

Contextual too should be our response to the self-disclosure of the Divine. It must reflect the colour, the tone, the cadence of the earth we have sprung up from, and the cultural traditions that continue to live and shape our consciousness. But how does the Divine disclose itself to us in the here and the now? The Divine presences itself to us either as an ennobling, healing, and full-filling gift or as a call addressed to us to promote life and love, and fight the forces of death and hate. Where the Divine presences itself to us as gift in our experiences of joy and love and human togetherness, our response will consist in reverence, thanksgiving, and surrender, which in their turn will find aesthetic expression in music, dance, drama, painting, and rituals. Where the Divine presences itself to us as a challenge, the appropriate response will be ethical action for the humanization of nature and society. The two modes of response, the cultic-aesthetic and the ethical, are not to

be viewed as disjunctive. For the self-presencing of the Divine as gift involves the command to preserve the same gift and share it with the community. Similarly, the challenge to promote life and love is itself a way in which we experience the presence of the Divine as gift. In either case, our response must take its concrete form from the uniqueness of our culture and history.

We are now in a position to understand how religion can become debased into the cult of the dead God. Since the self-unveiling of the Divine is necessarily through the relative and the conditioned, the believer may be tempted to set up the relative as the Absolute, the conditioned as the Unconditioned. In fact, the early Christian community could not resist the temptation to absolutize the revelation of the Divine in and through the historical Jesus, as is evidenced by the formation of the Canon. The fixing of the Canon as the final and the definitive revelation meant in effect that in and through Jesus God had said his last word and, having nothing more to say, retired from the scene. This amounted to silencing the Divine once and for all. A muted God is a dead God. Thus was the ground cleared for the vicegerents of God to step into his shoes and arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to interpret the revealed Word. But cut off from the breath of the living God, died also the revealed Word. And around the dead God and his no less dead Word, there mushroomed a plethora of dead symbols in the form of rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Thus Christianity gave birth to its own form of necrolatry. The churches became assimilated to graveyards of the spirit, and priests and bishops to undertakers. What is more, from out of the womb of estranged religion there came into the world a brood of Scribes and Doctors of the Law who specialized in what might be called post-mortem theology, a theology that dissects the Divine into clear and distinct ideas that can be pigeonholed or computerized for easy reference. Thus has Indian Christianity developed an excremental culture of dead symbols, irrelevant laws and inane interpretations. Might it not be that something like this state of affairs was in Jesus' mind when he told his disciples "to let the dead bury the dead"?

Where the cult of the dead God holds sway, the challenges of the living God go unheeded. This explains the silence of the official churches and their leaders in the face of the colossal problems our country is facing today — the appalling poverty of the

masses, the atrocities on the Harijans, the destruction of tribal communities, communal riots, bonded labour, the terrorism of the State compounded by the terrorism of the deprived, the criminalization of politics, economic neo-colonialism, cultural invasion from the West, the on-going rape of collective consciousness by the media, the death-dance of the monotheism of the market, and so on.

In order to become a humanizing force in our country, Indian Christianity must slough off its excremental culture and harken to the living God who presences himself to us in our here and now whether as gift or challenge. In the language of Jesus, the task facing the churches today is "to seek the kingdom of God and its justice first". Meeting the Divine in the loves and joys of our people will give rise to a new religious aesthetics of celebration that is neither imposed by the past nor imported from the Far West or the Near West. Faith will then body forth into communitarian singing and dancing and painting and sculpting and dramatizing. Meeting the Divine as challenge will initiate a new liberative and creative praxis that is non-sectarian, inter-religious, and truly ecumenical. Ghetto Christianity will disappear and in its stead will emerge open human communities modelled not so much on the exclusive concept of the church but on the inclusive concept of the festive meal of the end-time when people will come from East and West and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God. Simultaneously, our pompous, verbose theologians who claim to be able to lay bare the inner structure and functioning of the Divine will be silenced and their place will be taken by a new generation of prophets whose discourse will ever more resemble poetic-mythical diction, the only kind of diction that can do justice to the unfathomable and unspeakable mystery of the living God.

Admittedly, the metaphor of 'the dead burying the dead' is no adequate description of Indian Christianity. There are in it also energies of the new age to come that are struggling to be born. If nevertheless I have painted too sombre and lurid a picture, it is to be understood as a specimen of prophetic-apocalyptic hype meant to bring home to the readers the enormity of the challenge Indian churches are facing.

Inculturation and Ecclesial Structures

For Kavunkal inculturation consists in making the church relevant to the context, in historicizing salvation. The church is to live the Gospel in local cultures and let them experience Jesus Christ, and be transformed. The author argues for plurality in theologies, liturgies, church structures; and for greater role in church life for laity, especially women. Existing structures are historically conditioned, and must not be absolutized. The Indian church/churches must become autonomous and Indian.

Plurality and pluriformity are foundational to divine design for human beings. Human beings created in God's image (Gen. 1:26) are many and of different races. This is the basis of Inculturation. Just as there are different ways of being human, e. g. Italians, Ghanaians, Chinese, Indians etc., there are also different ways of being local churches. In this paper we shall outline some of the more salient features of inculturation and shall try to relate it to the structures of the church in India.

Inculturation

Like colour and race, culture too is a defining element of human diversity. Culture is the way of life of a people. Human beings are culture-bound, for culture is the extension of the requirements of human nature as the accomplishment of its end. Thus, culture has an autonomy. Every person has an inalienable right to belong to the culture of that person's ethnic block.

One understands what is filtered through one's culture. Hence the church has the obligation to present the Good News in the cultural idiom of the people to whom it is addressed. And, the people have the right to interpret and express their Christ-experience through their culture. Thus, inculturation is not only a question of translation; it is a matter of interpretation. Hence some speak of inculturation as a hermeneutical process.

Culture, the actual way of life of a people, is a comprehensive reality. It meaningfully includes also the political and economic realities, as these are very much part of the way of life of a people. Inculturation, thus, is the process of the Faith becoming part of a given culture, and thus relevant to the people of that culture.

Naturally, for the Gospel to become relevant to a people, it must respond to their aspirations and agonies, their hopes and struggles. Only then can the Gospel be Good News to them. So inculturation is not just a question of expressing salvation history (Faith) in a culture, through an adaptation of the church's liturgy by incorporating some cultural symbols of the classical past or by the religious swapping their imported habits; for some attire of the place, as it has happened in India. It is primarily a process of making faith relevant to the people, by responding to their context, with its economic, political and historical implications. In other words it is historicizing salvation. It is salvation of history just as Jesus presented evangelization in the parable of the good Samaritan. Inculturation, thus, has primarily to do with the mission of the church. Addressing the Pontifical Council for Culture on January 15, 1985, John Paul II emphasized: "You are called to assist the Holy See, with competence, to understand better the profound and diverse aspirations of the cultures of today and to discern better how the Universal Church can respond to these". The same theme he repeated in 1989 when he said: "You pass on to the Pope and to the Holy See tendencies and aspirations, the anxieties and hopes, the cultural needs of the human family, and you ask yourselves what the best way is for the Church to respond to the crucial questions posed by the contemporary spirit".

How to *live* the Gospel message in a particular culture is far more important than asking how to *translate* the Christian doctrines in the cultural idioms of the people. Christianity is a religion of a Person and His message. It is a commitment, a way of life than a system of beliefs. The key concern for us is to ask how to make the people experience Jesus and His message in the particular context. When each culture is enabled to experience Jesus Christ from its own perspective a new human understanding of Jesus Christ is realized. Thus evangelization must continue ever through inculturation.

Inculturation is an identification and a confrontation, as we see in the life of Jesus. He identified himself with the poor and the marginalized, the powerless, and at the same time he confronted the powerful. In fact this was the thrust of his spirituality, in so far as it was the expression of his abba-experience. This reaches its climax on the cross. He dies on the cross utterly poor and totally outcast as a result of his confrontation. It becomes a single act on the cross and the cross becomes a paradigm of inculturation!

Our efforts at inculturation thus cannot be self-oriented, but other-centred. How our culture can be permeated by the new life that Jesus brought, how it can be transformed by the divine reign that Jesus ushered in, would be our concern, rather than looking for cultural symbols to make ourselves feel at home, though search for symbols need not be ruled out entirely. Our talk about inculturation will remain abstract till we have the courage to get involved with the lives of the people, with their religiosity, with their struggles and hopes. Inculturation is the product of our involvement with the people and not a programme of translation, except if we mean translating our visions and concepts into actions of involvement with the people.

If plurality is divine design, we need not be alarmed by the rise of different local theologies, missiologies, liturgies, rites. Rather we must encourage the development of different local theologies. Theology is faith seeking understanding in a particular context so that it enables the christian to commit himself, herself to christian witnessing in that particular context.

This is of great significance for the church in India. Called to announce the message of Jesus Christ to the world of India and to build itself as a sacrament of God's reign in India the church in India has to respect Indian culture on the one hand and must be ever conscious of its identity and mission in India on the other. Mission and inculturation are inseparably linked. The community of those who respond to the Good News, is the local church and it must have "the name and face of a time and place" (John Paul II).

In relation to church-structures

In the light of the above considerations it can be said that inculturation has to keep the mission of the church as the top

priority. This is true of the church structures too. The structures of the church are to be inculturated in such a way as to make the church best suited for discharging its mission in each place.

The existing hierarchical structures with its total centralisation and clerical control hampers the mission of the church in several ways. It makes the main body of the church, the community of the baptized, passive, with all active roles invested in the hands of the ordained ministers or in the Curia. An exclusive male hierarchy has left out in the cold half of the community. The plurality of non-indigenous individual churches in the same place has damaged the cause of mission, and it is puzzling to non-Christians. A structure that has to depend on every score on the Roman Curia, cannot fulfill faithfully its mission by responding to the demands of the context in which it belongs.

Before we proceed further, it may be good to remember that most of the present structures of the church have developed and taken roots at a period when the self-understanding of the church was primarily that of an Institution. However Vatican II has given several models of the church among which the institutional model is just one and it is not by far the most important one. Today we would rather speak of the church as a community which is the sacrament of the Kingdom (LG. 1, 3, 4, 8 etc.)

The church is a communion

Keeping in mind the teaching authority of the church, it has to be emphasized that the church is a communion. The foundational sacrament in the church is Baptism by virtue of which the community of the disciples is formed. All other sacraments and ministries are seen in relation to, in service to, this basic sacrament. In other words there is a basic equality of all the baptized. The church as the community of the baptized is more basic than the functional and hierarchical structures of the church. The latter is only at the service of the former, so that the community can discharge its mission well. As Cardinal Suenens has written, "we can never meditate enough on the baptismal foundation of the church, this primal mystery of Christian existence, which unites in one decisive act the acceptance of the Lord, the profession of the Gospel, the purification from sin, the active presence of the Spirit and entrance into the community of the faithful" (1968:30). The ministerial ordination does not add any "moreness" to the

basic Christian-ness conferred by Baptism. Other ministries in the church are purely for service to this community, not above it.

If so the structures of the church cannot keep the laity off. There has to be lay participation at all levels of witnessing and decision making in the church. There is no reason why we have resolutely to cling on to the system of clericalism "that developed in the middle ages, and was perpetuated partly for ideological reasons, by the Counter Reformation" (Dulles, 1978:154). Dulles goes on to comment that there is no reason why a strong and efficient system of government cannot be combined with a large measure of lay participation and coresponsibility on all levels (1978:154). By virtue of their baptism, the laity are entitled to have a say in the affairs of the church as was the case in the early church (Acts 15:22).

This is also in conformity with the basic vocation of the church: mission. The church is missionary by its very nature, which affects every member of the church, not only those of the hierarchical structure. Speaking about the importance of mission, Rahner observes: "To win one new man of tomorrow for the faith is more important for the church than to keep in the faith two men of yesterday; the latter will be saved by God's grace even if the present and the future way of proclaiming the faith makes them insecure. God's strategy of salvation and that of the church are not simply identical" (1974:50). What Rahner has said of the way of proclamation is true also of the structures of the church. Change of existing structures, however offensive to some, must be effected and welcomed, if it is conducive to more fruitful discharging of the church's mission.

Linked with the role of laity in structures of the church is another aspect, viz, the share of the so called scheduled caste and Tribal people in such structures. It is commonly agreed that they form 60-70 percent of the Indian church. However one wonders as to what their share is in the decision making bodies of the Indian church!

Another vital area of inculturation of the structures of the church in India is the participation of women in such structures. In the Indian society women are condemned to take a subsidiary role. Hence it is part of the humanising mission of the church in

India to allow women to take their rightful place in the structures of the church at every level.

With regard to the question of allowing women to take their role in the hierarchical structures and decision making bodies of the church, the guiding consideration should be Jesus' attitude and behaviour to women as presented in the Gospels, as opposed to the general attitude to women in Judaism and in the Roman empire of New Testament times. Jesus' practice was in startling contrast to the times and without precedents. He even took the unusual step of allowing women "to follow him and minister to him" (Lk. 8: 3). Hence the fact that "the twelve" apostles were all men, may well be due to the particular patriarchal cultural setting in which only males could be sent out, and named leaders of the community. Whether the fact of their being male has any greater or any different significance for the leadership of the future church than the fact of their being Jew, is not made clear in the Gospels.

One church in India

The primary purpose of the church structure is to enhance the mission of the church. Mission presupposes that the church in India is one communion as the Lord prays for the church: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that (India) may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17:20-21). (Cf. also 22-23 where Jesus repeats the need of unity for the sake of faith.)

For a non-Christian in India what is confusing about the church is the bewildering divisions within in it, even among the Catholics, not to say anything about the multitude of Christian denominations. In the past, sufficient harm was done in the name of jurisdictions and rites. Mission in India has suffered due to inter-Rite-rivalry and infighting. For instance the mission of the church is invariably related to vocation to religious life. This is already facing problems due to the multi-ritual system each with its own Code of Canon.

The question is, should we perpetuate the mistakes of the past or should we boldly rectify past mistakes for the sake of the mission today? Prescinding, for the moment, from the orthodox and Protestant denominations, cannot all the Catholics join to

form an Indian church, in communion with all other catholic churches, and with responsible freedom to decide the structural and liturgical forms for itself? Our identity must be that of being the church in India than being a branch or a colony of the Latin, the Chaldean or the Antiochean church. This Indian church will find its roots and identity as far as faith expressions and structures are concerned in Indian traditions and contexts rather than abroad. In this perhaps the ancient apostolic church in India can play, must play a significant role.

In spite of the emotional attachment of some for liturgical languages, it is common knowledge that all the three languages (Latin, East Syrian and West Syrian) are foreign to India just as the rites they refer to. On the contrary, just as all Indians take pride in the ancient civilization of Mohenjodaro and Harappa, so too, all Christians in India can rejoice that they stand heir to the living tradition of an Apostle. That is the common Patrimony of the whole church in India. The right course should have been that all the new members were added to this Indian church. Historical factors made it otherwise. This, of course, as we have already pointed out, does not mean that all should subscribe to a rite that was imposed on the Indian Christians probably in the 5th century after the Persian Synod of 484. Today the Indian church could evolve its own rite with sufficient flexibility for regional differences.

Since these languages themselves have practically ceased to be in use, one need not make them a bone of contention or trace one's identity to them. What would be constructive is to concentrate our attention on the main purpose of the church's existence, i. e. , to be the sacrament of the Kingdom for India, by being one, holy and apostolic. It is common knowledge that the fact of the existence of various rites in India is the result of the struggle for power and control from various quarters. The diversity of rites is an enrichment to the universal church and a powerful witness to its catholicity. However one wonders how this can be when the diversity exists often in conflict with one another, within the same context, that too, a predominantly non-Christian context. The legitimacy of diversity comes from differences in contexts, as it was the case also in the early church. The logical outcome of

that diversity will be a distinct identity for the church in India, with room for its regional differences. That will enrich the universal church.

Naturally this will imply a lot of dispossession and renouncement from various quarters. But weighed against the mission of the Church in India, that may appear to be a sort of conversion that we have to go through for the cause of the divine reign in India.

In fact the Holy See has already provided some opening for such a development by the Papal letter of May 1987, which made the CBCI "praeter legem", i. e. , neither under the Oriental nor under the Latin Code, but with specific tasks of a national and supra-ritual character. What is to be of top priority is the common good of the church in India, its unity and its mission.

With responsible freedom

This local church in India could retain relatively large juridical autonomy. The Petrine office would be for maintaining the unity of the church, while respecting the autonomy of the local churches which are also responsible for the basic substance of the Christian faith.

It may be recalled that for the most part the present structures that we have is human-made (Cf. Schillebeeckx, 1985: 43; Lynch, 1988:13-23) and hence is adaptable for the better service of the Faith. Ecclesial structures are primarily for leading the community to its mission. If the mission suffers due to the exercise of authority, we have to look into its legitimacy and share alternative forms that would foster mission. As McKenzie has commented, "it is leadership determined by the mission of the church and, therefore, not self-conscious about itself" (1965:47).

What would be ideal is a sort of autocephalous communion, as it was practised in the early churches, a tradition that is preserved in the West Asian and Greek churches. As Paul VI declared on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the Pontifical Greek College in Rome in 1977: "It is precisely in the Eastern Church that we find anticipated and perfectly demonstrated the variety of the pluralistic scheme".

Whereas Greek and West Asian ("Eastern") Churches emphasized the nature of communion, and the significance of the local churches, the West European local churches increasingly declined and heaped all their importance and responsibility on the see of Rome. The local churches became more and more parts of a whole governed monarchically by the Pope. In the "East" governing was done synodally. "As the Patriarch of the West, the Bishop of Rome was regarded as the arbitrator in cases where canon Law was disputed, but the task of making dogmatic decisions was reserved for the ecumenical councils" writes Denzler describing the situation before the separation of the "East and West" (1971:67).

We must remember the role played by the Emperor too in the Church. The Emperor was seen as the emanation of divine power and was venerated as the representative of God, and as an apostle, and his office was acknowledged by Pope Leo I as priestly and he was regarded as competent judge in matters of faith (Cf. Denzler, 1971:66). Although the Emperor's direct power did not extend to dogmatic decisions, he did summon, preside over and direct the proceedings of Synods and Councils.

Hence, we can say, the present form of Papacy and the structures that we have today are the result of an evolution during centuries, something that was achieved not without paying the onerous price of destroying church unity. It was Pope Nicholas I (+ 867) who first claimed a *plenitudo potestatis* over all the churches and later in 1053, Leo IX affirmed that the holy Roman and apostolic see was according to the Lord Jesus, the "head" of all God's churches. The Counter-Reformation further tightened the Papal control over the local churches.

The present structures and their roles cannot be absolutized; they must be seen in their historical evolution with all its fall-outs. Particular emphasis must be laid on the early church as it stood in proximity to the Lord and to the Easter experience. This must cause an attitudinal change in all concerned, taking into consideration the aim and mission of the church in today's world in general and in India in particular.

Allowing larger space for the local churches and restoring their spontaneity in the spirit of the early church will also

contribute to the cause of ecumenism. For the different churches will be impressed by the Catholic church's determination to foster diversity for the sake of communion, abandoning positions that are not part of its essential claim, or directions that are not inspired by the memory and presence of Jesus.

Concluding remarks

Archbishop Eugene D'Souza of Bhopal in his pastoral letter of January 1993, in the wake of the Ayodhya incidents, calls for a "lot of rethinking of our theology as it is taught in India, our mission theology and its praxis, our priestly ministry and apostolate and especially the function of the church in India in the context of Ayodhya and its aftermath" (1993:3). In this spirit of interpreting the signs of the times, we have to reflect seriously on the structures of the church in India both internally and in its relation to other churches. This exploration must always be guided by the desire to fulfill its mission in the best way in the Indian context, and to preserve its internal communion.

In the name of perduring values and basic unity we need not cling to church structures and ways of conceptualizing faith experiences that became common at a particular age or in a specific culture. Otherwise it would be equivalent to holding that the Jewishness of the Christian faith is part of its identity — a position rejected by the apostolic community (Act. 15). It is this truth, I believe, that John Paul II was trying to bring home when he told the Roman Curia on December 22, 1984: "It would be difficult to express it more clearly or profoundly. The universal Church is presented as a communion of Churches (of particular Churches) and, indirectly, as a community of nations, languages and cultures. Each of them contributes its own gifts to the whole, as does every generation, every epoch, every scientific and social achievement, and every newly reached level of civilization". As Hans Kueng has observed, the catholicity of the church is to be seen "as a catholicity within the variety of individual churches, individual opinions, rites, languages, nations, offices and charismata" (1965: xi).

— When the church in India has its own form of structures, enabling the Gospel message to become a Good News for the people of India it will be an inculturated ecclesial structure. It

will not be scared of being different from other local churches as long as it is faithfully responding to the demands of the Gospel in tune with the local context and thus makes the church a genuine sacrament of the Kingdom to India.

Jacob Kavunkal

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Liturgical Inculturation in India

Paul Puthenangady, former Director of the NBCLC, Bangalore, traces the history of recent struggles for liturgical inculturation in India, and names five obstacles in its way. In the course of the story, he underlines certain basic principles of authentic worship like the community's encounter with the Risen Lord in its own history, embodiment in the local culture, autonomy of the local church and its right to be liturgically creative. Looking into the future, he emphasizes the spontaneity of worship emerging from below and within; the necessity of critical adaptation of people's religio-cultural symbols and of proper catechesis that should enable us to touch the Mystery beyond signs and symbols.

The core of the liturgical renewal of Vatican II, consists, I believe, in making the symbols more meaningful and relevant to the community with a view to elicit the full participation of the faithful in the celebration. This is stated very clearly by the Liturgical Constitution: "In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself. For the liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change. These latter not only may be changed but ought to be changed with the passage of time, if they have suffered from intrusion of anything out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy or have become less suitable. In this restoration both texts and rites should be drawn up so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as is possible, should be able to understand them with ease and take part in them fully, actively, and as a community."¹ The change of symbols, however, should not be understood as mere substitution of one symbol with

another; a symbol is something that emerges from the experience of the community. The symbol cannot be imposed by another person or body that is alien to the existential situation of that community; a symbol, therefore cannot be prescribed for the universal Church. If the implications of the principles enunciated by the Council are taken seriously, the liturgical symbols will have to be formulated by the local Church. This is what we call 'inculturation of liturgy'. But the very same Constitution seems to contradict this principle when it gives the norms for the inculturation of liturgy: "Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved, provision shall be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission countries. This should be borne in mind when drawing up the rites and determining rubrics."² While it is legitimate that our liturgical celebrations express our communion with the universal Church, it is not possible to maintain this unity through a conformity with the Roman rite because then we shall not have symbols but mere signs that express a common meaning without any emotional involvement; and there cannot be any genuine participation in a celebration where the emotional element is not adequately expressed. Therefore, the provision that substantial unity of the Roman rite should be maintained in implementing the liturgical renewal in India cuts at the very root of the process of inculturation which is so essential for a liturgy that can elicit genuine participation of the faithful. The liturgical renewal in India will have to look forward to a genuine Indian liturgy or liturgies and not to an Indian liturgy that is a mere adaptation of the Roman rite.

The Church in India took the implementation of the Vatican renewal very seriously and considered inculturation of worship as one of the immediate priorities in the liturgical renewal as can be seen from the declarations of the CBCI at the General Body meeting of 1966 held at New Delhi in October 1966³. It was also accepted by the Roman authorities enthusiastically at its initial stage as can be seen from the ready approval of the so-called 12 points of adaptation proposed by the CBCI in

2. SC 38

3. Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Delhi 1966

1969⁴. But things began to take a new turn when efforts were made to make liturgy genuinely Indian through the composition of texts and rites that did not have reference to the official liturgical books published by Rome. The progress of liturgical inculturation in India has suffered a set back when the Indian Church, in fidelity to the Spirit and in the spirit of Vatican II renewal began to evolve its own symbol system. In this article I intend to trace the story of this struggle between the need of an authentic inculturated liturgy for India and the effort of Rome to foster an Indian liturgy which preserves the substantial unity of the Roman rite. In this context, I would like to note that the protagonists of this ritual Roman unity are not only those who are in charge of the Congregations in Vatican, but also many of those who preside over the particular Churches in India as well as people who are quite satisfied with the impersonal character of the pre-Vatican liturgy.

1. The struggle towards the inculturation of liturgy

Although many institutions and organizations took up the challenge posed by Vatican II in this field, I think it is right to say that the National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre set up by the CBCI at Bangalore has played a unique role in this area. A brief survey of the efforts of NBCLC will enable us to understand the journey that the Indian Church has made in order to create a liturgy that is the expression of the faith of the Christian community in India, in other words, an inculturated liturgy for our land with its variety of cultural expressions and spiritual ethos.

The task of liturgical inculturation in India followed a phased programme thoroughly planned and to be gradually implemented⁵. The first phase of it consisted in the efforts to create an Indian atmosphere of worship: gestures, postures, forms of homage, objects and elements, silence and interiority. In order to effect this, the liturgical commission prepared a document that contained twelve points of adaptation to be

4. *Notitiae* 48 (1969) pp. 365-374

5 D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Towards Indigenisation in the Liturgy*, Bangalore, p. 26ff.

introduced into the liturgy of the Eucharist. These were approved by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship in April 1969. Later on, the whole Order of the Mass was rearranged in order to integrate these twelve points of adaptation into the celebration in such a way as to lead to an orderly flow and harmony in the conducting of the liturgical action. Thus, a process was initiated towards the evolution of an Order of the Mass for India.

The second stage of our movement towards an indigenous liturgy for India consisted of some major adaptations such as the composition of prayer formulas, including the Eucharistic prayer, preparation of rituals for the celebration of the sacraments and the celebration of Indian festivals. An Indian anaphora was composed with a view to proclaim the marvels done by God not only in Israel, but also in India and in the whole world, taking into account the language and the manner of praying specific to India. The text of the anaphora was circulated for experimentation and comments and was proposed for approbation to the CBCI in 1972⁶. But it was not declared passed due to a dispute over the majority of votes required; hence it was not officially forwarded to the Congregation for Divine Worship. It was however used in many institutions and by many groups by way of experimentation with the authorization of the Bishops. In 1975, through a letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, this experimentation was stopped and the use of the Indian anaphora as well as its circulation in the country was forbidden. This situation continued till 1990. In the meeting of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) - Latin, a revised text of the same anaphora was presented and approved. This text has been forwarded to Rome for approval. No reply has yet been received from the Roman Congregation.

The work of adapting the sacramental rites has been undertaken by various subcommissions and is still going on in various parts of the country. The plan of adapting Indian feasts has been implemented to some extent. Masses were composed for the celebration of certain religious feasts such as

6 Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI — Madras 1972.

Divali, Saraswathi Puja and some social festivities like the harvest festivals and national celebrations like the Independence day and the Republic Day. A commission was also set up in order to work out a draft for an indigenized form of the Liturgy of the Hours.

The third stage of inculturation of liturgy in India was concerned with the use of the Scriptures of other religions in the Christian liturgy. In 1973, the NBCLC published *Pro manuscripto* — a collection of texts from the Scriptures of other religions for personal reading and meditation. It was also proposed as a possible text for the Office of Readings for the eventual Indian edition of the Liturgy of the Hours. In this collection, together with the biblical and patristic texts from the typical edition of the Liturgy of the Hours, an optional reading taken from the Hindu and other religious literature was introduced. It was, however, very strongly felt that the use of non-Christian literature in the liturgy needed further and deeper study and reflection. A research seminar on non-biblical Scriptures was conducted in 1974 in which the question was thoroughly examined by the scholars in various disciplines. The pastoral proposals based on theological and liturgical principles regarding the use of non-biblical Scriptures in the Christian liturgy were submitted to the hierarchy for consideration and decision. In the meantime, the same letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1975, mentioned above, forbade the use and circulation of these texts for the Office of Readings.

2. Policy of inculturation followed by NBCLC

The inculturation of liturgy in India could not be done without taking into account the socio-ecclesial and cultural situation of the country. There exists three different rites in India: Roman rite, Syro-Malabar rite and Syro-Malankara rite. Although all three of them have been existing in this country for centuries, none of them reflects the cultural reality of the nation. In this sense we may say that all need to be inculturated. Hence all the three rites are to take up the task of renewing their respective liturgies without sacrificing their specific ecclesial identity, and at the same time work towards the creation of

7 D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Research Seminar on Non-biblical Scriptures*, Bangalore 1974.

authentic Indian forms of worship. Perhaps in this process they might arrive at something common, since the human element or the cultural reality is the same for all in spite of their particular ecclesiastical traditions.

Besides the ritual differences, India is a country of great regional diversity. The plurality of Indian cultural and religious traditions requires that the indigenized liturgy should not be rigidly uniform. Each group ought to develop its own forms of worship, thus working towards an authentic form of worship. This will result in the creation of liturgies in India that are pluriform, but at the same time having many elements in common, since there is a basic cultural unity in the country in spite of the differences in expressions.

Our efforts towards an authentic Indian liturgy have also an ecumenical dimension. The other Christian churches are also invited to work towards the evolution of an authentic Indian liturgy within their own ecclesial traditions. Thus the policy of liturgical inculturation is an all round ecclesial initiative having as its goal not a uniform Indian liturgy, but authentic Indian liturgies with varieties of forms and expressions, manifesting the richness of the mystery of Christ in the rich cultural context of the nation.

3. The difficulties encountered in the implementation

We can find in this matter a double attitude both on the part of the people and ecclesiastical authorities: in principle, all accept it; but when it comes to implementation there seems to be many practical difficulties. Some of these have their roots in the very understanding of being Christian and Catholic, while the others stem from the unwillingness to change the status quo. We shall try to analyze them.

For some, inculturation would lead towards hinduisation. The method of evangelization followed in India, especially during the colonial period is partly responsible for it; it was based on a negative approach to other religions and cultures. To become a Christian meant to accept the Christian faith in a particular cultural form in which it was presented by the missionaries. In the process of inculturation we introduce many forms of worship

which are in common with the other religions. These were rejected by the Christians as evil at the moment of their conversion to Christianity; to accept them now would amount, at least for some, to return to what they rejected as evil and erroneous. It is not very easy to overcome this emotional block, even for people who are intellectually convinced about the need of inculturation.

Another difficulty is found in the misunderstanding of ecclesial communion and catholicity. This is very often explained and understood as dependence on Rome. We find this dependence both in the people and in the leadership. The idea of a genuine local Church as a community of faith gathered together in a particular place, trying to express its faith through symbols taken from its life and culture, is not fully understood by all. In the mind of many the Indian Church is a branch of the universal Church, or rather, of the Roman Church. No liturgical changes, including the use of the vernacular translation of a liturgical text, can be made without the approval of the Roman authorities. Rome itself is fostering this sense of dependence as can be seen from the double standard used by them in the matter of liturgy. The Missals of many European countries have several anaphoras approved by Rome (some have even 16 anaphoras), while our one Indian anaphora which, from a theological and liturgical point of view is a good composition, has been waiting for approval for so many years. One wonders at this point whether this treatment meted out to our Church and other third world Churches is not due to the fact that in addition to being related to Rome for the authenticity of our catholic communion, we are also economically dependent on them for our institutional existence.

A third difficulty is found in the principle enunciated in art 38 of the liturgical Constitution which we have quoted and explained above. Rome has not yet fully recognized the autonomy and the ecclesial character of the Indian Christian community. We can exist in the Catholic communion only with the adjective - 'Roman' attached to our Christian identity. As long as this attitude is continued in the Church authentic inculturation will never take place in this country.

In the fourth place, our bishops need to become aware of their role as leaders of their Christian communities and not merely as subordinate officers of the Roman curia. The consciousness that they, as leaders of their liturgical communities, are the first ones responsible for the creation of an authentic liturgy that expresses the faith of their communities through symbols taken from the culture and life of their people is an absolutely needed condition for the fulfilment of their role as leaders and animators of their liturgical assemblies. It is necessary for them to realize that liturgical celebration is primarily the action of the local community and as animators of their communities, they have the duty to make liturgy relevant to their people and not merely implement literally some Roman documents. In fact, even the new liturgical rites that have been published by Rome request the Bishops to make the necessary adaptations before implementing them in their dioceses.

Finally, we see that a major obstacle to inculturation has been the lack of catechesis. The new liturgy demands a change of attitude and understanding on the part of the faithful and pastors. This calls for an effective pastoral action on the part of the Bishops, priests and lay-leaders. In spite of the fact that we have been working at the implementation of inculturation in India for the last 25 years, one of the reasons why we have not achieved the desired result is the lack of catechesis.

4. The present situation

In assessing the present situation, we can distinguish two areas in our ecclesial scene. The one is the present position of the hierarchy; both Indian and Roman; the other is the actual practice of inculturation in liturgy in the country. Let me begin with the first. The Bishops of India showed great interest in, and continually affirmed their support for, the cause of inculturation. This is clear from all the reports of the General Body meetings of the CBCI⁸ during the post-Vatican period. After the intervention of the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship forbidding the use of the anaphora and the circulation of the Texts for the Office of Reading, the Standing Committee issued a circular enforcing these directives of the Holy See. From then on, the Bishops have shown a certain excessive caution in this matter;

some thought that by the directive, even the implementation of the 12 points of adaptation was forbidden. As a result some put a stop to the process of inculturation that was being implemented in their dioceses. The meeting of the Bishops of the Latin Rite in India, held on the occasion of the CBCI meeting in Mangalore in 1978, reiterated its decision to continue with liturgical inculturation in India: "Liturgical renewal can hardly be adequate and complete without adaptation or inculturation... The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), in virtue of SC arts. 22 2 and 40 1 as the competent territorial authority will have the overall responsibility for inculturation in the liturgy. It will initiate studies on elements of indigenization, submit concrete proposals to the Apostolic See (SC 40/1) and with the latter's approval, set up experimentation centres"⁹. We may consider this statement of the Bishops as a relaunching of the movement for inculturation which had slowed down after the Roman letter. Next year, in 1979 at the General Body meeting of the CBCI, conducted at Ranchi, another significant event took place. The Bishops decided that the matter of inculturation would henceforth be dealt with by the Regional conference of Bishops because it was felt that the diversity of cultures, together with the regional differences that exist in India made it difficult to proceed with this matter on a national level. But the National Centre could still give inspiration and assistance to the Regions. This resulted in the following situation. Some of the regions, especially those of the North, took this directive seriously and worked well towards the inculturation of liturgy, while some others, especially those of the South not only did not do much in this field, but a few of them even considered the lack of interference of the Centre in this matter as a blessing in disguise which permitted them to continue in their traditional liturgical practice. In fact we may say that this is the actual state in the country as far as official implementation of inculturation of liturgy is concerned.

From 1987 another factor made its appearance affecting the liturgical life of the country. The letter of Pope John Paul II, constituting India into three Individual Churches made it clear that liturgical matters would no more be the competence of the CBCI,

but of each Ritual Church. This had a double effect: The Bishops of the Latin Rite felt more free to proceed with their liturgical renewal. In fact in the meetings of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of India — Latin (CCBI - Latin), the question of inculturation was taken up once again and they showed their determination to proceed with the inculturation of liturgy in right earnest. Even though it still continued to be a matter of the Regional Conferences, the CCBI took initiatives to promote it on a national level. One of the signs of this relaunching was shown when one of the Bishops presided over a Eucharistic celebration according to the Indian Order at their Goa meeting in 1991. Besides, as we have already mentioned they also approved the revised draft of the Indian anaphora and sent it to Rome for approval. In the case of the Syro-Malabar Church, the present controversy over the liturgy has put the issue of inculturation to some extent in the cold storage. Although all are of the opinion that inculturation is a need, the liturgical renewal is taking the shape of a restoration of the Chaldean liturgy. There is, however a strong group that advocates inculturation as the correct solution to the liturgical problem that is afflicting the Syro-Malabar Church today. However, at the moment all experiments of inculturation are officially forbidden in this Church.

Now we come to the practice of inculturation in liturgy in the life of the Christian communities in India. Wherever the indigenized liturgy was introduced with appropriate instruction and initiation, the acceptance on the part of the people has been almost total. The experiential character of the celebration has touched the emotional life of the Christians to such an extent that faith has begun to become more and more meaningful. This is noticed in a special way in the widespread use of Indian forms of singing and in the use of Indian symbols and expressions of homage such as *arati* etc. during worship. Participants who have had an experience of the indigenized liturgical celebrations attest that this way of worshipping has given them a taste for prayer, a sense of belonging to the Church that is their own, has created a greater awareness of God's presence in their lives, a greater appreciation of the cultural heritage of the nation as a gift of the creator, a strong commitment to the Gospel, a more profound sense of respect for people who belong to other religions and readiness to join them in the common quest for fullness and fulfilment,

a more experiential awareness of the mysteries of Christian faith and a deep-felt need to live a more authentic Christian life. Now, one might ask: where do we find such communities? I must confess that these are not found generally in our parishes although efforts are made in our parishes to introduce Indian symbols in worship, such as oil lamps, bowing instead of genuflection, arati etc. In the north of India, certainly the inculturated liturgy has made greater progress than in the south. This is true especially in the rural areas. In smaller communities, in houses of formation such as novitiates and seminaries, there is an effort to make liturgy more indigenous. We must admit that we have still to find a method by which we can inculturate our parish liturgies. This is evidently a gradual process; but the important thing is to begin this process as soon as possible. No one can and should pretend to present to our parish communities a ready made Indian liturgy. It has to evolve from within the community, with a pastor who exercises a genuine leadership in this matter. He needs to be sufficiently free to do his experiments and make changes that are relevant to his pastoral situation. An inculturated liturgy will become a reality only in the measure in which we can initiate a meaningful movement towards this in our parish communities.

5. The future of inculturation of liturgy in India

In what sense can we speak of an inculturated liturgy in India? For many, this is a problem: given the fact that India is a country of cultural pluralism and that liturgy is Christian worship, how can we justify the borrowing of symbols from the other religions? The basis on which the whole process of inculturation rests is the reality of incarnation. It is the emergence of the divine from within the human reality; every human reality can serve as the ground of this emergence. "Incarnation is the dynamic and most personal encounter between God and man. This dynamic event of God-man encounter took place in the very dynamics of human existence and world history, and in the heart of a changing world, in the midst of a socio-cultural milieu. It also set in a dynamic process, and interaction and transformation in each man, in the entire human community and in the whole cosmos"¹⁰.

10 D. S. Amalorpavadass, *Gospel and Culture*, Bangalore, 1978 p. 21.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the beginning of this process on the cosmic level. The Church is the manifestation of this dynamism. Hence there is no Church unless it emerges from within the human community; it is for this reason that we can say that there is no Church without being localized, concretized, visibilized in a particular cultural milieu. The Church is therefore a mystery that happens and not an institution that is transplanted. It has for its humus the religious, cultural and social reality of the particular area. Christ has given it no structures, and much less any rituals; the only gift of Christ to the Church is His Spirit which has to incarnate and acquire visibility through the human reality wherever and whenever the Gospel is preached. Once we accept this principle of emergence from below as the starting point of the ecclesial reality, inculturation becomes an absolute necessity for the very historical existence of the Church. We have to situate the liturgical inculturation within this theological perspective.

Here in India, the process of evangelization has consisted very much in the changing of religion rather than in the conversion of heart. As a consequence, becoming a Christian meant to renounce Hinduism as a religion with all its symbolic system. In the bargain a very important element of Indian religiosity has been overlooked, namely, the role of Hinduism as an expression of the spiritual quest of the human being in India. In fact, I believe, this is the core of Hinduism; the characterization of Hinduism as one of the religions in India is of later origin; perhaps this happened in the context of the entrance in India of other so-called religions, or better of the institutionalized religions which did not have their cultural roots in India. The symbol system that expresses the spiritual quest is part and parcel of the heritage of every person in this subcontinent and therefore in the process of the emergence of the encounter between the divine and the human, these should be fully taken into account. Pope Paul VI on the occasion of his visit to India asked the people of this country to "express their faith and devotion in harmony with the civilization of India and in truly Indian forms" and added that if efforts were made in that direction the Church, having gathered the varied treasures of many cultures of East and West, would "be further enriched by the contribution of her Indian sons, drawn from their country's

rich and ancient cultural traditions''¹¹. In the light of these considerations we can say that inculturation would be hinduisation inasmuch as Hinduism embodies the spiritual quest of India. Naturally this need to be subject to a prophetic critique because there can be ambiguities in the process of this embodiment. But it is not possible to think of an authentic inculturation which rejects this embodiment, namely the religious symbol system of India. While religion tends to reduce God to an idol, spirituality is oriented to an unconditional search for God on the part of man. What we need to eliminate is the defects of the former and maintain the dynamism of the latter. Then the adoption of symbols from the Indian religious and spiritual tradition will not only be relevant, but will become an absolute necessity for initiating a process of meaningful encounter between the human and the divine, namely the incarnational movement in this country.

The other major problem seems to be the plurality of cultures. In reality this is a problem only for those who hold a monocultural view of human society. The Indian perception of reality is based on experience and not on abstraction. In a descriptive approach the one is the combination of the many and not the result of the elimination of the many. India, in fact is a mosaic of cultural expressions. The oneness of this nation is to be found not so much in a conceptual clarity as in the experience of a living process. In fact every Indian is such because he/she has a particular way of being Indian. The plurality of cultural expressions is a constitutive element of our cultural reality. In the light of this, we can never envisage a monolithic Indian liturgy. Every region, every particular group will have to work towards the inculturation of liturgy from within its life situation. This will result in many Indian liturgies. The policy adopted by the Indian Bishops, namely regionalization, with regard to inculturation, is certainly a correct direction, provided they are seriously committed to it.

The inculturation process that begins from the local reality of India will have to face a very serious problem vis-à-vis Rome, which has a monolithic understanding of unity as is clearly expressed in art 38 of the liturgical Constitution: 'the preservation

11 Jacob Mananathodath, *Culture, Dialogue and the Church*, New Delhi 1990, p. 145.

of the substantial unity of the Roman rite' because an Indian liturgy will have nothing to do with the directives of Rome in its formulation; it will be the product of the local church; it will be prepared with the collaboration of the community of Christ which has a sense of their cultural identity as well as their Christian belonging. After all, if we examine the liturgical history of the Church, it is clear that Rome began to enter into the liturgical regulation of the Church only in order to safeguard the Church from doctrinal errors implied in the ritual expressions of faith. No liturgies that we have today have been formulated by a central authority. This is quite natural because it is not possible for anyone to prescribe symbols for another since symbols have their origin in the experience of the person or the community. When there is an external prescription, we do not have symbols, but rituals. These have been abolished by Christ as is very clear from the letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:5-10). Therefore, in order to have an authentically inculturated liturgy, we need the liturgical autonomy of the particular Church. Our Bishops have to play an important role in this. They need to have a renewed understanding of their relationship with the Roman authority and they must know how to affirm it without in any way endangering the unity and communion of the Church.

Our liturgical inculturation will not take off the ground unless we have an enlightened laity and clergy. The people must be made to realize that the formulation of liturgical rites has its origin in their experience of Christ from within their life-situation and cultural context. It is necessary to make them realize that it is not possible to have a meaningful symbolization of faith except within their cultural ethos. Their participation in the liturgy demands that they have a sense of belonging to the community of faith living in a particular human context. Participation is an act of response to God who speaks from within their life-situation, to God who is active in their history. Only those who are involved can respond adequately; otherwise they will be only giving correct answers and not correct responses. A thorough catechesis, oriented towards a change of attitude is very much required in order to make inculturation become a reality in our Christian communities. At this juncture, it is important to understand that no change of attitude can take place except through a gradual process. So what we need is not only instruction, but initiation. This is called formation through experience. This will demand from those who undertake this task to be involved in the life of these communities not only at the time of the liturgical celebration, but through a sharing of life under all aspects. From this it is clear that inculturation of liturgy can take place only in the context of a living community in which everyone is trying to share his or her faith with others using meaningful symbols. Such a liturgy will emerge from life and will be truly inculturated.

No one can think of liturgy as a formula that emerges from committees and commissions. In fact no liturgies have come from the expertise of the liturgists. The liturgical experts are the attentive listeners and participants of a community that is living its faith. Spontaneity has a very important role to play here. Precisely because of this spontaneous character of liturgy, liturgical change will be an on-going process. We can never have a liturgy that is made once-for-all. For this reason the true liturgist is the one who is celebrating liturgy and not a scholar who studies the rituals even if he does it with sound theological principles. Allow me to make an observation, in this connection, about what is happening in the Syro-Malabar Church today. The liturgical renewal in that Church consists merely in the restoration of ancient rites. The renewed liturgy is the product of a group of liturgical scholars. The reaction of the enlightened laity to this liturgy is a clear indication of its irrelevance. It is not enough to instruct people on the meaning of the rites. The symbols must emerge from life; only then can there be a proper response. What the people are asking today is for this possibility to respond to the God of their history and culture and not to a God and Christ discovered and portrayed by the ancient Fathers of Mesopotamia and Persia. The sensitivity to the Lord who is acting in the midst of the people and not merely an expertise in the liturgical sciences, is an absolute necessity in order to give a meaningful leadership in the liturgical renewal of the Church today. What we have said about the Syro-Malabar Church is also applicable to the other Churches.

Conclusion

We cannot build up an authentic Indian Church and consequently an authentic Indian liturgy unless we take seriously the truth of the resurrection of Christ by which he did not simply come out alive from the tomb, but became present in the whole world. He is deeply involved, therefore, in our Indian reality. He is proclaiming the Gospel and challenging the Indian society continually. As disciples of the Lord we need to acquire the sensitivity to listen to him and respond to him from within our history and struggles of life. This is the real test of the quality of our faith and not merely repeating the formulations of faith made elsewhere and imitating the rituals in a book published in a far away place. Inculturation of liturgy is not therefore, a mere cultural expression of our faith, but the manifestation of our readiness to respond courageously to Christ who continues his mission in this country.

Rites, Rubrics and Reason

Looking at rites / liturgies controversies from a lay and womanist perspective, the author finds them inane, shallow and destructive of love. She calls for culturally relevant communicative symbols and for celebrations that can lead us to surrender to the Mystery in day-to-day life and for moving on to realms of deeper spirituality.

It is with some hesitation that I venture these personal reflections on the liturgy debate going on in Church circles in Kerala. Such debates can get overly emotional or dogmatic. I fear that a dispassionate reflection on this controversy may not be appreciated in circles where the debate is hottest. A noteworthy point is that the liturgy debate originated with some Bishops and a few clergy, while the vast majority of the lay people in the Church, women religious included, have had little to do with this development. I am not aware of any grass-roots demand for changes in the Liturgy. Lay Catholics have had no role in giving birth to this controversy. But now the issue, having started with Bishops and Clergy, has spread over the wider Church, and every one is sucked into this not particularly creative debate.

I speak as a lay Catholic woman who has made a religious commitment in the Church. To my lay eyes, the liturgy debate raging in the Church of Kerala does touch neither the basic content of Eucharistic Symbolism nor what is substantive in Sacramental meaning. The controversy seems to centre on the modalities of ritual forms and the niceties of rubrical nuances. In itself this debate does not come across to me as particularly relevant to my own Christian life and religious commitment.

It is with these remarks, that I enter into this debate to make my own extremely personal and thoroughly unscholarly reflections on this whole topic.

Worship in truth and in spirit

Public Prayer and common worship seem to be integral to the life of every organized religion. This is true, at any rate, of Christianity. The usefulness and relevance of rituals come from their capacity to symbolically express some deep truth or belief in powerful and captivating ways so as to appeal the imagination of the believers or the faithful, and thereby affect their behaviour and life-responses. All the Sacraments in the Church are religious rituals representing deeper realities. Every one of them symbolically expresses some religious [belief, experience, reality, within the Church, and has the power to strongly motivate the faithful.

For me, it is the power of the Sacramental Symbolism to effect change in the life of the worshipper that ultimately matters. The symbols must speak powerfully to the believer and worshipper and put him/her in contacts with God's saving deeds and gifts, thereby enabling him or her to greater depth and creativity in response to life. If this fundamental function of rituals and rites is not kept in mind, Sacraments can become some sort of magical tools in the hands of the priestly class to manipulate the faithful even in dehumanising ways.

To give an example: a parish priest in a coastal village of Kerala is very popular among the rather conservative fishermen of the village, who prefer him to conduct the ritual of blessing their fishing crafts before they are sent out into the sea. The fact is that this priest is wellknown for mumbling through his prayers in such a way that no one in the audience can actually understand what he mumbles. But what is important and attractive to the fisher folk is the mystification — an atmosphere of the magical and the mysterious — that the prolonged mumbling creates. In this case, therefore, it is the length of the ritual and the magical ambience which the priest creates during the ritual that matters, not the symbolic power of the ritual itself, or of the inspirational words used in it. This is an example of what I call a dehumanising ritual.

No ritual or rite whatsoever is meaningful or humanising to me unless its symbolism powerfully speaks to me, moves me, and challenges me to a more creative response to the mystery of life. In the case, for example, of the Holy Eucharist, which is the

most central and Sacred ritual and Sacrament in the Church, we have the uniquely powerful symbolism 1) of human beings' self-giving to God in the ritual of the "offertory"; 2) and of the inclusion of the gifts in Christ's self-offering in the ritual of "consecration"; and 3) finally of God giving God's own Self in Christ to the world and to the faithful in the ritual of the communion service, thereby becoming one with the people. It is when these multiple symbols grip and mould the faithful that the Eucharistic Liturgy becomes a meaningful and humanising Christian ritual and Sacrament.

Nature, role, and function of symbolisms of rituals

Symbols are related to culture. They are also related to communication patterns. In a living and growing culture symbols can become outmoded and progressively non-communicative of the original meaning. Many ancient symbols and ritual practices have had to be given up as irrelevant in the course of the history of every civilization and culture. It may also be remembered that many languages once considered sacred like Latin, Greek, Aramaic, had to be given up when they could no longer communicate meaning to the people. Hence sacralising rituals and rites, without reference to their cultural appropriateness or relevance, or to their capacity to move and mediate life to people, is to me meaningless, irrational and dehumanising.

I look at the entire rite controversy in Kerala, as primarily a clerical preoccupation, and that too confined to a limited number of clerics. It is of little significance or use to the ordinary Christian or to the Church as a whole. I look up on this inane controversy as born of a lack of spiritual depth. It reveals a shallowness and an absence of Christian sensitivity in the life of the Church in Kerala. I am inclined to think that this controversy reflects much more the demands of Ecclesiastical power — games between Church functionaries, than a genuine concern to respond to the cultural, social or spiritual needs of the people of Kerala. What is so tragic in my eyes is the fact that this kind of controversies instead of healing and building up an already divided Church serves only to further fragment and weaken it. I cannot escape the uneasy feeling that a subtle form of communalism, a touch of caste mentality and an Ecclesiastical variant of one-up-manship,

all of which have been the lingering bane of Kerala Church for the past 4 or 5 centuries, are rearing their ugly head once again behind the sacred facade of concern for ritual purity and respect for ancient traditions. I understand that new divisions and barriers are being created between the Catholic faithful of this country in the matter of inter-rite marriages, inter-rite religious and priestly vocations, and even inter-rite parish affiliations. What is sadder still is that this communal canker which was confined to Kerala is now being vigorously propagated by priests and Bishops in the settlements of Kerala Catholics in the other parts of India and abroad, where till now there was unity and harmony. We seem to be forgetting altogether the insightful teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus that "Sabbath is for man and not man for Sabbath". Whatever be the justifications and rationalisations given, to me it is a real pity that religious leaders and Church men themselves undertake the slow destruction of love and unity among the faithful. I am also rather pessimistic about the possibility of our enlightened and educated lay Catholics preventing the destructiveness and inhumanity of these power games. This pessimism is based on the fact that lay people, however educated or enlightened, can play only a very peripheral role within the structures and dynamics of the Church.

As a woman in the Church, I feel particularly sad about controversies concerning rites and rituals and presumed traditions, taking centre stage and thereby pushing aside the real issues and problems of the Church, of the country and of the people. These vital problems get shunted to the periphery of people's consciousness and concern. There is no need to point out here, that women are allowed to play only a very secondary and subsidiary role in the Church as a whole, and in the field of Sacramental rituals and rites in particular. Controversies like the present one are occasions when I as a woman am inclined to thank God for small mercies, for I feel free from ritual polemics within the Church and free for commitment to the cause of life and of the people.

Trivializing Church life through controversies of this nature, not only makes the Church lose face before men and women of reason and common sense, but also induces cynicism and contempt in the youth and the intelligentsia of the Church. This may not be felt as a problem by those who are deeply and emotionally

involved in this controversy. Sometime back I was expressing my fears to a highly placed senior priest friend of mine; his quite friendly answer was: "Don't worry, if the youth and the intellectuals are alienated from the Church for the time being, they will all come back to the Church when they are old". And that was that.

Worship in the Church

As far as I am concerned, all rites and rituals are only human tools for worshipping and sharing in the mystery of God. Worship at its best is total surrender to this mystery of God which manifests itself in the mystery of all realities. When rites and rituals and traditions are used for the creation of myths and divisions in the Church, they become the very opposite of worship. "Worship in truth and in Spirit" is just not possible unless the prime preoccupation in the Church is with search for truth and spiritual depth. Sometimes I have wondered about this raging controversy in our Church, and asked myself, "Is this not one of the best ways of reducing rituals and rites to tools of blasphemy rather than make them medium of worship?"

If true worship is surrender to the mystery of God, it should also be a surrender to the realities in which God incarnates and manifests the Divine self. What controversies like this achieve in practice is to alienate the faithful from the world of realities where God dwells, and where God's challenges confront them; and to plunge them into the world of fables and trivialities. Indeed the very possibility of true worship of God gets blocked when the Church gets bogged down in controversies of this nature.

I often feel that if only we could move from the world of shallow religiosity to a world of deeper spirituality, where God is met and responded to in the day-to-day realities of our lives, not many of us would be overly preoccupied with controversies on rites and rituals. Perhaps this whole phenomenon is a reflection and a sign of the shallowness of our Christian faith and commitment.

From a more practical point of view in so far as I have had some experience of it as part of the ordinary faithful participating in the Eucharistic celebration in the newly formed liturgical version, I have felt rather disappointed. I have felt the priest becoming more distanced from the people in the new liturgical form. I have wondered whether the throw back into the presumably more ancient and Chaldean form of rubrics was really needed, helpful or more meaningful for the modern Church goer. I have also wondered what these ancient Chaldean forms of rubrics have to do with the present day Indian or Kerala culture, in which we are invited by God and the Church to incarnate ourselves, our faith and our Liturgy.

Alice Lukose

Rites and Churches

This study starts by naming 6 liturgical families in the church, goes on to define a 'rite' and distinguish it from church. The Church is a communion of individual churches each of which has its own identity, a truth rediscovered by Vatican II after a period of secularised centralisation. The article emphasizes the heritage of individual churches, the equality of these churches in the right and the duty of evangelization and pastoral care, and the importance of mutual openness above territorial restrictions.

1. The Liturgical families and the regional alliances of Churches

There are six Liturgical families in the Christian tradition. They are Roman, Alexandrian, Antiochian, Armenian, East Syrian (Chaldean) and Byzantine¹. All these except the East Syrian had their origin and development within the Roman Empire.

In the fourth century the Roman Empire was divided into Eastern and Western². The Churches within the western half of the Roman Empire began to be known as Western and those in the Eastern half as Eastern Churches. The Roman liturgical tradition spread in the West and the local variations known as Ambrosian, Gallican, Mozarabic etc. gradually merged into the Roman tradition except a few local differences. But the situation in the East was different. There the Churches of the important centres like Constantinople (Byzantium), Antioch and Alexandria developed their own liturgical traditions which gradually spread to the neighbouring regions as well.

In the early Church the liturgical traditions were never viewed on nationalistic basis. The liturgical forms which developed in important centres of ecclesiastical learning were

1 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO) can. 28 n. 2.

2 The Eastern Roman Empire had its origin during the time of Emperor Arcadius (395-408) who succeeded his father Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395). There were two Prefectures (Oriens and Illyricum) and seven civil dioceses in the East and two Prefectures (Italia & Gallia) and six dioceses in the West.

spontaneously accepted and followed by the people of God of the neighbouring regions. Such regional grouping of the neighbourhood Churches was a spontaneous development during the early centuries. The liturgy formed the basis of their common faith traditions which were publicly celebrated by means of certain symbols and rituals generally known and accepted by the early christian communities. This is the background of the theological principle, *lex orandi, lex credendi*³.

The Church of Rome spread in the western world irrespective of the racial, cultural and national differences. For example, the Roman Church with its Latin liturgical tradition was gradually introduced into North Africa, England, Ireland, Scandinavian countries, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal and later during the colonial period also into North and South Americas and African and Asian countries.

The Alexandrian liturgical tradition was shared by the neighbouring Church of Ethiopia⁴. Similarly the Antiochian liturgy was welcomed in Syria and Lebanon and from the 17th century also in India⁵. The East Syrian liturgical tradition which developed in the East outside the Graeco-Roman world was welcomed by the Christians in the East, i. e., of China, Mongolia, India and the various islands within the region⁶. This regional grouping of the Churches was not opposed on national basis. The practical autonomy of the local Churches was helpful to develop their indigenous identity. For example, though the Church of the Thomas Christians of India formed part of the regional alliance of the East Syrian Church, they had their own administrative system

3 M. Vellanickal explains how the different individual churches came into being with their own specific identity. Cf. "Perspectives on the Identity of the St. Thomas Christians", in *Mission in India Today*, edited by Kuncheria Pathil, Bangalore, 1988, p. 91.

4 For example from ancient times all bishops in Ethiopia were Copts from Egypt appointed by the Coptic Patriarchate. In 1929 four natives were elected to assist the Egyptian Metropolitan. It was only in 1951 that an Ethiopian Metropolitan was chosen by the Ethiopian clergy and laity. It was confirmed by the Coptic Patriarchate in 1959, raising its head to the rank of Patriarch.

5 In 1653 a section of the Thomas Christians protested against the Portuguese Latin rule and in 1665 welcomed Mar Gregorios, an Antiochian Jacobite bishop.

6 William G. Young, *Handbook of Source Materials for Students of Church History*, (CLS Madras, 1977), pp. 22-23.

which differed from the Persian system. In the liturgical traditions also there were certain local differences. The Churches outside the Roman world did not form part of any effective ecclesiastical centralization as it happened in the West.

The history of the great religions of Asia teaches us that they were not confined to the nations of their origin. In the christian tradition as well we can observe various spiritual movements spreading beyond national borders. For example, many religious Orders which had their origin and development in the concrete context of Western Europe, have in course of time spread in African and Asian countries, admitting adherents from everywhere. It is true that India was well known from very ancient times for its saints and sages and monasticism. But, this religious heritage did not stand in the way of welcoming the Religious Orders, Congregations and Societies from the West which still have their central administrative head quarters in Europe. Thus history teaches us that the faith traditions of the great religions, their forms of worship and spiritual heritage were never confined to any particular country. The same phenomenon can be observed in the spreading of the liturgical traditions of the Churches also.

2. The liturgical families and the 'Rites'

The regional alliances of the churches based on liturgical celebration did not stand in the way of developing different organizational, administrative and juridical structures of the different churches. As Vatican II asserts "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed and at the same time the fountain from which all her power flows"⁷. The faith of the Church is officially and publicly celebrated in the liturgies. The various churches in the Catholic communion are classified as follows on the basis of their liturgical traditions:

Antiochian: Syrian, Maronite, Syro Malankara.

East Syria: Chaldean, Syro-Malabar.

Armenian

Alexandrian: Coptic, Ethiopian

Byzantine: Greek Melkite, Ukranian, Rumanian, Ruthenian,
Slovak, Hungarian, Italo-Albanian, Crisevci, Russian,
Greek, Bulgarian, Bylo-Russian, Albanian.

3. The notion of a 'Rite'

Canonists have made various attempts to define 'Rites'. The concept has undergone an evolution. We give below the definitions of two eminent canonists of this century:

"A rite is the ecclesiastical order (complexus) by which not only the liturgical matters but also the whole discipline of the part of a Church is governed"⁸. The same author at a later stage redefined Rite as follows: "A Rite is a group of faithful who are governed by laws and customs of their own, based on ancient traditions, not only in regard to liturgical matters, but also in respect to the canonical order, and which group is acknowledged by the Holy See as autonomous and distinct from others"⁹. We have the following definition of Acacius Coussa: "The sum total (complexus) of the liturgical laws and proper disciplinary norms of a particular Church"¹⁰. In canonical legislations and even in the Conciliar documents the term 'Rite' does not have the same meaning everywhere¹¹.

The above-mentioned evolution in the notion of Rite reveals the need to redefine it. The application of the word rite to the Church is of Western origin. This term does not fit into the Eastern ecclesiological vocabulary. For the Westerners the Eastern Churches form part of the one Church with some differences in the external rituals. Consequently those Eastern Churches which maintained communion with the Roman Church began to be viewed not on the basis of their ecclesial identity but in terms of their rituals¹²! Even in these rituals there was a tendency to conform them to the practices of the Roman Church¹³. Such a policy led some of the Catholic Eastern Churches to a kind of hybrid form of existence. It is to be noted that the liturgy, spirituality,

8 Emilius Herman, "De Conceptu ritus", *The Jurist*, II, 2, (1942), p. 339.

9 E. Herman, *De "Ritu"*, p. 105, pro MS.

10 Acacius Coussa, *Epitome Praelectionum de Jure Ecclesiastico Orientali*, Grottaferrata, 1948, p. 14.

11 Cyril Mar Baselios, *The Holy Catholic Church as the Communion of Churches*, Ernakulam, 1993, pp. 4-5.

12 Cfr. Placid J. Podipara, *The Rise and Decline of the Indian Church of the Thomas Christians*, Kottayam, 1979.

13 Cyril Mar Baselios, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

discipline, theology etc. constitute the individuality of a church. When these elements are partially adulterated the ecclesial identity itself becomes degraded and deformed; it disintegrates. A church with a diluted or adulterated identity projects a distorted image and becomes shy of its own identity. This is the actual situation of those Eastern Catholic Churches which have not succeeded in preserving their identity¹⁴.

As the liturgy is the most sublime expression of the life of a Church Vatican II gives the following directive:

"All Eastern rite members should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their lawful liturgical rites and their established way of life and these should not be altered except by way of an appropriate and organic development. Easterners themselves should honour all these things with the greatest fidelity. Besides, they should acquire an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them. If they have improperly fallen away from them because of the circumstances of time or personage, let them take pains to return to their ancestral way"(BE 6).

The alienation of the Eastern Catholic from the authentic Eastern traditions is an obstacle to ecumenism. The clerical formation imparted to the Oriental seminarians and religious in the Latin seminaries is largely responsible for this alienation and loss of ecclesial identity. They are being formed after the Latin pattern¹⁵. They are unaware of the rich Eastern heritage and try to follow the Latin practices¹⁶.

The new code of canons for the Oriental Churches (CCEO) has a separate title *Churches sui juris and Rites*. It is subdivided into two chapters:

1. Enrolment in a Church *sui juris*
2. Preservation of Rites

14 The situation of the Syro-Malabar Church is a living example of this strange phenomenon.

15 The first Latin Seminary was started for the latinization of the Thomas Christians at Cranganore in 1541 by a Franciscan friar Vincent Lagos.

16 On 6th of January 1987 the Congregation for Catholic Education published a circular insisting upon the need to promote Eastern studies and emphasizing their importance.

Churches or Rites in the canonical tradition

The new code uses the expression *Churches sui juris* for the Individual churches. Under the title *Churches sui juris and Rites*, we have the following definition for an Individual Church which was formerly called also Rite.

Canon 27: A group of faithful united by a hierarchy according to the norm of law which the supreme authority of the Church explicitly or tacitly recognizes as *sui juris*, is called in this code a Church *sui juris*. The CCEO gives the following definition for a rite: Canon 28:

"A rite is the liturgical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary patrimony, distinct by the culture and circumstances of history of the people, by which its own manner of living of the faith is manifested in each church *sui juris*."¹⁷

The new Oriental code gives a normative value to the ecclesial patrimony developed in the important ecclesiastical centres of the early Church which are known as Antiochian, Alexandrian, Constantinopolitan, Chaldean and Armenian¹⁸. As we have already seen, these centres played a unique and distinctive role in the regional grouping of the Churches. The liturgical families known after these centres were accepted by all the local churches of the region though most of them have developed their own disciplinary and administrative system.

4. The latin church and the process of centralization

Christianity has its origin in Asia. From there it spread in all directions, in the Roman Empire and outside. It reached Persia and India during the apostolic period itself. Edessa, which was outside the Roman Empire was the first Christian city and a centre of Christian learning.

Though Christianity was a persecuted religion within the Roman Empire it did spread there rapidly and became free at the beginning of the 4th century. Gradually it became the official state religion. The Empire was divided into Eastern and Western, and Constantinople and Rome became respectively the capitals.

¹⁷ This definition has concluded a long evolutionary process in defining the Rite. CCEO 28 n 1.

¹⁸ CCEO n 2,

The administrative divisions and systems of the Roman Empire became the official system of the Church as well. Under imperial protection, the Greek cultural heritage, combined with the Roman legal system, effectively influenced the formulation of the Christian doctrine, the organizational development and the juridical structures.

Yves Congar makes the following observation on the nature of this change:

“The clergy were given important privileges, the bishops became *illustri* (Excellency), and for all practical purposes, ranked with the senators. They were invested with public authority within the framework of the Empire even in the sphere of the secular life of the cities. Further, Church laws often became laws of the Empire which undertook to see that they were respected... Under these conditions we ought perhaps to expect that authority would change its character and that it would acquire a much more secular, a much more juridical meaning, based simply on the relation of superior to subordinate”¹⁹.

a. Formation of the Papal States

The various vicissitudes of history such as the decline of the Western Roman Empire, Lombard wars, weakness of the Byzantine Emperors, rapid spread of Islam, religious disputes, and Frankish intervention and alliance led to the formation of the Papal States and the Popes began to play political and religious roles in the West. Such a situation led to alienation between the churches of the East and the West. Those churches which existed outside the Roman Empire, such as the church of India and Persia, developed a kind of practical autonomy.

The Roman Church became the most powerful unifying force in the West. The role of the Pope as the supreme leader of the politico-religious reality of Christendom was a point of contention and dissension causing disquiet among the national kings. The crusades and challenges from outside necessitated an increasingly unifying leadership under the papacy. A highly centralized administrative system began to develop in Rome and various canonical legislations sustained and consolidated such a development.

19 Congar Yves, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, London, 1965, pp. 46-47.

b. Process of centralization

Historians bring to our attention the various means which were introduced by Rome for achieving an effective centralization. The Inquisition, 'ad limina' visits, different kinds of legates such as *Nati*, *Missi*, and a *Latere*, conferring of *pallium*, reservation of beatification and canonization, confirmation of relics, etc. are among the means used during this period²⁰.

The unhappy events from the time of Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), such as the Avignon Papacy (1309-1376), Western Schism (1378-1417), administrative anarchy and conflicts with the kings were symptoms of weakness at various levels. The theory of 'Two Swords'²¹, the Crusades²², categorical assertion of *Unam Sanctam* of 1302²³, reliance on the document called the Donation of Constantine²⁴ etc. reveal to us the mentality of the times.

c. Padroado system

It was in such a context the Popes granted special favours to Spain and Portugal²⁵ giving them possession over the colonies till the end of time! The sharp contrast between the conquering mentality of the West and of the peaceful coexistence of the East is reflected in their mutual relations. The arrival of the Portuguese in India in 1498 and their subsequent relations with the Christians

20 Neil T. P. & Raymond Schmandt, *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 224. The authors give the details of the process of centralization in the Roman Church.

21 St Bernard explains the medieval concept of the spiritual and material power of the Church centred on the Pope. Neil & Schmandt, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-207.

22 For the evidences of the politico-religious leadership given by the Popes during the time of the crusades. Cfr. *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, published by the Department of History of the University of Pennsylvania, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 6-7.

23 Pope Boniface VIII has made the following strong statement: "Wherefore, we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff".

24 "This charter is proved to be a forgery at the time of Renaissance, but generally considered genuine until that time, purported to be a deed by Constantine the Great granting to Pope Sylvester I (314-335) temporal sovereignty over the entire Western Empire and primacy within the Church" (Neill & Schmandt, *op. cit.*, p. 145).

25 Papal Bull "Inter Cetera" of May 4, 1493 and Treaty of Tordesillas of June 1494.

of St. Thomas²⁶ provide us ample evidences of this contrast which naturally led to serious conflicts and divisions which continue even today!

5. Vatican II and the rediscovery of the concept of the communion of Churches

The Vatican II stands out in the history of the general Councils for its unique goal: renewal and reunion. The Council does not canonize the past. On the contrary it tried to return to the authentic sources. The prophetic words of Pope John XXIII 'to shake off the dust of the Empire that has gathered on the throne of St. Peter from the time of Constantine'²⁶ provided a corrective and directive principle in the process of rediscovery. By following it the Council has rediscovered the true nature of the Catholic Church as the communion of churches.

Some of the statements of Vatican II on the nature of the Catholic Church:

Communion of Churches: "The Church, Holy and Catholic... combining into various groups held together by a hierarchy form separate Churches or rites." (OE 2)

This is followed by other statements on the equality in the rights and obligations of the Churches for evangelization, pastoral care and self government.

Evangelization: "(Individual Churches or Rites) are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others by reason of rite. They enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, even with respect to preaching the gospel to the whole world under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff" (OE 3).

Pastoral Care: "Therefore, attention should everywhere be given to the preservation and growth of each individual Church. For this purpose, parishes and special hierarchy should be established for each where the spiritual good of the faithful so demands" (OE 4).

Self-Government: "For this reason, it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, fully enjoy the right and are in duty bound to rule themselves" (OE 5, cfr also UR 16).

26 Congar Yves, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, p. 127.

Distinctiveness: The Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* specifies the distinctive elements proper to each Church: "By divine providence it has come about that various Churches established in diverse places by the apostles and their successors have in course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage" (LG 23).

In these and other conciliar documents the Catholic Church is presented as the communion of individual churches. As the legitimate heirs of the divine tradition of the Church these Churches have a unique and inalienable role to play in the life of the universal Church.

6. Theological and practical reflections

a. Churches are not mere Rites

In English Dictionaries the meaning given to the word rite is the following: form of procedure, solemn ceremony, the manner in which a ceremony or observance is carried out, ceremonial observances, customary words, gestures etc. All these refer to the externals only. In this sense the word ritualism means the attitude of paying too much attention to externals with the result that true religious faith and human values are neglected.

Giving emphasis to externals at the cost of true spiritual and human values is alien to Christianity. The Church is the Body of Christ and the Spirit of God dwells in it. The external reality of the Church is only the sign of its divine, invisible and internal reality. Hence the application of the term rite to a church is a distortion of the church's true nature. The rituals are meaningful in the Church only when they are signs of the ecclesial reality. An individual church within the Catholic Communion has got its liturgy, spirituality, discipline, theology, traditions etc. But the term rite does not convey at all these essential aspects of a church. The distinctive ecclesial identity of a church goes much deeper than the external ritual differences²⁷.

27 Congar in the light of his ecumenical experience criticises the superficial

Rite: its western connotation

The term 'rite' is never used by the Eastern Churches to signify a Church. For the Easterners, as we have already said above, the Church of God consists of Churches with their own individuality which included liturgy, spirituality, discipline, theology, traditions etc²³. The starting point for the Easterners is the reality of the different churches living in communion while the West seems to start from the universal Church and proceed to the local, individual and particular Churches. Here the oneness of the Church precedes the diversity of the reality in which it exists. The Easterners view the Churches as the legitimate heirs of the apostolic heritage united in the bond of communion of faith celebrating the sacred mysteries within the divine constitution of the Church of God. In this perspective the different churches with their own unique ecclesial identity and heritage are not mere rites but sacred signs of the divine plan of salvation for the whole humanity.

In the Western world the Roman Catholic pattern emerged from the beginning and it became the uniform standard. Any kind of local differences were considered as something merely external which was expressed by the term rite. It was in this sense the Roman Church began to consider the Eastern Catholic Churches in communion with Rome. There were attempts to conform them to the Roman pattern, as rites! Their mere ritual existence without the authentic ecclesial identity and venerable patrimony projected a distorted image of the Eastern individual Churches! The following observation of Cyril Mar

approach of Latins towards the Eastern traditions and their rituals by adopting biritualism:

"Latin and Western priests thought that they could go over to the Eastern 'Rite' simply by growing a beard and celebrating in Greek and Slavonic: better sometimes, with 'indult', the Byzantine rite could be borrowed for a particular day or occasion! But the rite is more than just a collection of rubrics! The Orthodox were quite right to criticize such practices. Sometimes they did so with such aggression, suspecting the Catholics of a sinister Machiavellism: Rome simply wanted to draw them into its net, without believing in the validity of the rite or recognizing the profundity of what it represented. We should recognize that some facts and some texts could have justified this suspicion". Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, London, 1984, p. 83.

Baselios is relevant: "The Oriental Churches deprived of their ecclesial identity and role as churches of their own right, were reduced to the level of rare patrimonial specimens to be preserved and protected under the patronage of the Latin Church."²⁹

- b. The individual Churches, legitimate heirs
and living witnesses of the authentic traditions

The ecclesial heritage enshrined in these churches has to be esteemed, preserved and fostered. These traditions belong to the whole Church. The apostolic proclamation of the gospel of Christ was understood, appreciated, interpreted and lived in different places by the people belonging to the different socio-cultural and religious background. Hence diversity became evident from the very beginning. This variety in no way stands against the basic unity of faith. They reveal the multi-dimensional aspects of the same truth revealed by God. Hence the churches which faithfully maintain these traditions play a unique role in preserving the divine heritage of the whole Church. Consequently the mind of the Catholic Church is "that each individual church or rite retain its traditions whole and entire while adjusting its way of life to the various needs of time and place" (OE 2).

The fulness of Christian tradition is achieved only when the different traditions of the apostolic churches are brought into full communion. The diversity of the traditions manifests the richness of the Christian heritage. Hence the churches have the obligation to remain faithful to their authentic traditions. If they give them up the Catholic Church becomes impoverished. The ecclesial traditions cannot be preserved if they are not properly understood, appreciated and faithfully lived. A living community alone can give an adequate expression to an authentic form of catholicity. Hence Vatican II wants the members of the different churches to remain faithful to their own traditions and follow them with the greatest fidelity (cf. OE 6).

- c. Fundamental rights of a Church:
Evangelization and pastoral care

Evangelization and pastoral care are the most fundamental rights of the Church. They are the two essential dimensions of the same mission of the Church. As the Catholic Church is the communion of the churches the basic rights and obligation of

²⁹ Cyril Mar Baselios, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

the Church are equally applicable to and shared by all the churches within the same communion. This principle is explicated by Vatican II (OE 3).

It is through the exercise of these basic rights and obligations that the churches fulfil their unique mission and grow in their individuality and in spiritual communion. The Churches build up their catholicity and unity by fulfilling their basic obligation and exercising the rights. The catholicity and communion demand that every church should not only be conscious of its own rights and obligations but also do everything to make it possible for the other churches to fulfil their rights and obligations. Its violation is a sin against unity and catholicity of the Church of Christ.

d. Territoriality in the Church

As we have already observed in our historical survey the strict territorial jurisdictional set up of the Church is a particular development when it became the official state religion of the Roman Empire. The secular political systems are built up on the subordination and coordination of the various administrative units based on territorial divisions. It is not proper to give an exclusively secular image to the Church absolutizing it all over the world.

The individuality and patrimony of the churches cannot be territorially confined. If the territorial principle is universally applied the first occupant of a vast territory becomes its monopolizer. This secular and political principle is sociologically and historically questionable in a fast growing and changing world where the people are not strictly territorially restricted. To impose territorial restrictions on the spiritual and ecclesial traditions is an unfair application of an outdated secular system to the Church of God.

On the other hand the so called 'one territory, one jurisdiction' has not been historically sustained as a universal principle. Had it been, the Padroado and Propaganda jurisdictions of the Latin rite would not have been introduced into India where the Church of the Thomas Christians existed from very early centuries. On the other hand the Orientals were territorially confined to less than half a percent of the total Indian territory

and almost parallel Latin jurisdictions were set up even within the Oriental dioceses.

e. Fidelity and openness

Openness to the other ecclesial traditions is a genuine sign of catholicity. Fidelity to one's own tradition does not mean denial of or adverse attitude to the valid traditions of the other churches. It is through mutual esteem and openness the Church becomes really catholic.

At the same time openness to other churches and their traditions does not mean a blind acceptance of their practices. A Church becomes genuine and catholic in proportion to its fidelity to its own authentic sources and openness to the others. If the Churches do not remain faithful to their own ecclesial heritage they will be diluting their own identity. A diluted identity loses its distinctiveness. Those churches which fall prey to the blind imitation of other churches have very little to contribute to the catholicity and fullness of the Christian heritage.

Conclusion

We have made this brief survey on the *Rites and Churches* in the context of the so called "Inter-ritual" problems, in India. The development of the main liturgical families of the Church form part of the Christian tradition and their regional grouping was a spontaneous development within the early Church. It has a constitutive role in the faith tradition of the Church. The regional solidarity paved the way and provided the background for juridical and organizational structures. The various individual churches and their identity have to be understood and appreciated in this specific historical context.

The faith traditions preached and initiated by the apostles, enriched and explained by the Fathers, and lived and celebrated by the churches for the last twenty centuries are being expressed by means of commonly approved symbols and rituals. The attempts to view these symbols and rituals apart or isolated from the reality which they signify is an attempt to distort the ecclesial reality itself.

The ecclesial heritage which is primarily a spiritual tradition is universal in its nature and mission. Hence the territorial character which the Church in the Roman Empire inherited as the official State religion and the subsequent organizational and juridical structures which it assumed, cannot and should not become obstacles that obstruct and obscure the universal character and mission of the faith traditions enshrined in the various individual churches. Any attempt to brand these ancient churches as "Rites" cannot be historically and ecclesiologically justified.

Xavier Koodapuzha

Caste and the Syrian Rite in Keralam

The author offers a case-study of how a privileged place, like being high-born castewise, enjoyed by a christian community in a given socio-cultural structure and uncritically idolised, can blunt the prophetic edge of the community's Faith, kill its transformative power and empty it of real content; and how the idol can use religion's inauthentic elements to bolster itself up.

From its very inception Christianity found a place in the structural hierarchy of the Kerala society. It had a place of honour in Kerala as it was held that St. Thomas came to Malabar and converted a few families of Nambudiri Brahmins¹. The life these converts led among caste-shaped communities bore the marks of surrounding social realities. They engaged in such occupations as were considered noble and appropriate to high caste Hindus. In the caste hierarchy they were second only to the Brahmins who, being priests of the kings had the first rank. Religious life based on caste system has far reaching consequence for converts. The caste shaped life of the Thomas Christians, however, helped them to preserve and keep their traditions among the vast masses of Hindus².

In a society like India where social stratification is mainly and strictly controlled by the caste system, no other ideological influences, be they religions like Christianity or Islam, be they political ideologies like democracy, can succeed in changing the basic assumptions of thought or social ordering. Converts to Islam and Christianity have retained caste hierarchies with regional variations. In the case of Goa, Yule and Burnell,

1 Nagam Iyah, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1906, p. 123.

2 Koodapuzha Xavier, "The History of the Church in Kerala in the Pre-Portuguese Period" George Menachery (Ed), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedial of India*, Trichur, 1973, p. 32, Placid of St. Joseph, "The socio-ecclesiastica customs of the Syrian Christians of India, *The Eastern Churches Quarterly*, London, 1947, p. 222 - 236.

quoting from the sacred council of Goa of 1567, describe the Gentoos (Hindus) as divided into distinct races or castes (*castas*: a word coined by Portuguese signifying breed, race or kind) of greater or lesser dignity, and all christians as having a lower status, and keeping them so with the result that no one of a higher caste will eat or drink with them³. But in Tamilnadu, the entire christian body was not categorized as one, low caste; instead, even after conversion they kept up the respective caste status. The Madras high court had to adjudicate on the rights of a Christian congregation which sued its priest for breaking down the wall which divided the aisle of the caste christians from the aisle assigned to untouchable christians. In Tamilnadu there were churches with separate naves giving on to a common chancel, to accommodate hostile castes⁴. L. K. A. Iyer, writing of the Syrian Christians of the Malabar coast, says: *The average Indian christian is a staunch observer of castes. It is a moot point whether he is not stricter in his observance of castes than the average Hindu. There are a large number of Christians in the Southern Districts of the Madras Presidency who even boast of their being firmer and truer adherents of the caste system than the Hindus*⁵. Caste adherence gave social stability to the christians especially in Kerala where they occupied higher rungs in the caste hierarchy. Besides, this was the only opportunity through which the community could be integrated into the existing social structure and eventually gain credibility. Later on when the Portuguese came and the conversion to christianity which so far had been restricted to upper castes⁶ was extended to other lower castes, the syrian rite became a protective cover for the Thomas christian. The rite became a means of defining and guarding their superior rank in the caste hierarchy of Kerala. Earlier, even if there were some conversions from the lower castes, only after a period of three generations, were they accepted as equals with the earlier

3 Yule and Burnell, A. C, *Hobson-Jobson* 1883 (Ed) Crooke.

4 Bougle C, "Essais sur le Regime des Castes" *Tracaux de l' Annee Sociologique* Paris, 1913. p. 26.

5 Iyer L. K. A, *Anthropology of Syrian Christians*, Ernakulam, 1926, p, 218.

6 Pillai, Elamkulam Kunjan, *Chila Kerala charitra Prasnangal* (Mal) Kottayam, 1963, p. 130.

converts⁷. Thus Syrian christians in Kerala till the coming of the Portuguese enjoyed the status of upper caste, and afterwards they protected their privileged social status by strictly adhering to Syrian rite. The rite, a complex religious reality expressed in a particular cultural idiom, was now used as caste mark. This rite emerged as a form of life and worship in west Asia. Any convert could be a member of this congregation of worshipers and caste normally should not be a barrier. But in Kerala this form of worship instead of remaining at the level of religion and church activity, was used as a tool of caste stratification by the christians who strongly adhered to the west Asian form of worship, leaving the new converts to embrace the Latin rite, and assigning it a lower status. Even those who were originally 'Syrians' but later on became 'Latins' in Verapoly and Quillion⁸ were not considered equal in status with the 'Syrians' of the 'Syrian' rite. It is true that the 'Latins' were divided among themselves and had their own caste and social hierarchy. The political climate of Kerala at that time was partially responsible for the emerging social scenario. The Portuguese who were a strong political force, in collaboration with the Jesuits who were close associates of Vatican and Lisbon tried in vain to Latinize the 'oriental' christian community of Kerala. This made the Syrian Christians to close themselves against western cultural intrusion. Eventually the rite became a tool of caste stratification. Thomas christians transformed rite into a socio-structural variable instead of using it as a cultural expression of their religious life and worship.

Kunjan Pilla writes that till the coming of the Portuguese only high caste people who believed in Jesus Christ and wished to enter the catholic communion were admitted into the Thomas Christian Church. Since they maintained the social structure of Kerala and kept high standards in trade and commerce the

7 Hutton J. H, *Caste in India, its nature, function and origin*, London '61 p. 204.

8 Among the centers of the 'Latin' rite Quillion was the foremost. For several centuries it was famous as an ancient Christian centre of 'oriental' rite, as well as a seaport and capital of an important kingdom, where St. Thomas himself was believed to have built one of his seven churches, Pylae L. M, "Latin rite in Kerala" *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopaedia of India*, (Ed) George Menachery, Trichur, 1973.

Thomas Christians were considered equal to the high caste Hindus. The authorship of ancient books like *Vaiseeka Thandram* and *Thottam* were attributed to Christians of Namboodiri origin. But after the coming of the Portuguese, the Christians associated with them started eating beef, by which they lost their equal status with the high caste Hindus. It should be noted that only at the time of the British did beef become common food among Kerala's Christians⁹. But making the Syrian rite the hall mark of traditional Christianity and limiting the expansion of the Syrian Church to high caste hindus, Thomas Christians succeeded to a large extent in maintaining their caste status even after the coming of the Portuguese. Once they understood the significance of the rite in the Kerala social structure, they stabilized it by strict adherence to the traditional norms of the Syrian Christian community. Even now, in certain communities within the Syrian Church, like the Knanaya Catholic community of Kottayam, the demarcation between the social and the religious is very narrow. At this point let us explore the various caste elements that were prevalent among the Syrian Christians.

The four major elements that are used to distinguish caste from other forms of social stratification are: commensality, hierarchy, restrictions on marriage and hereditary occupation. Since the Thomas Christian community has its origin from the Nambudiri Brahmins of Malabar, their social customs mostly were of the Nambudiri Brahmins¹⁰. Hence traces of all these elements of the Caste system could be found in their practices.

Untouchability was as strictly observed by them as by the caste hindus. The vessels or wells polluted by the approach or touch of low caste people were used only after ceremonious purification. The Christians never touched a person of an inferior caste, not even a Nair. On the roads and in the streets, they gave the customary call in order to receive precedence from

9 The Portuguese began among the St. Thomas Christians the work of making them change from the Syro-Chaldean to the Latin rite. Both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities strenuously strove for the implementation of this policy of "latinising" the St. Thomas, Christians. Pillai 1963.

10 Brown L. W., *The Indian Christianity of St. Thomas*, Cambridge, 1956, p. 176-177; Chacko I. C., *Bishop Aloysius Pereparambil, Life and Times*, Trivandrum, 1937, p. 50-51; Thurston E, *Caste and Tribe of Southern India*, Madras, 1940, Vol VI, p. 406

passengers; and if any one, even a Nair, should refuse this mark of honour, they were entitled to kill him on the spot¹¹. Endogamous marriage was prevalent. It may even go to the extreme form as in the Knnanaya catholic community of Kottayam where even marriage with other catholic syrians is forbidden for fear of pollutting the Knnanaya breed. There were many caste practices which are akin to the Christian belief system but were practised by them in order to keep their identity in the caste hierarchy. Caste and rite were merged into a socio-cultural mosaic.

Without going into details we can find that Syrian Christians succeeded in keeping their high status after the coming of the Portuguese by ascribing their caste status to the syrian rite and considering all converts to the Latin rite as of low status.

This explains the near absence of missionary movements in the Syrian rite churches in Kerala, which would otherwise be the very core of Christianity elsewhere. The Portuguese antagonism further stabilised the caste-rite equation, eventually leading to a congruence of advanced communities and Syrian rite; and new converts, and the latin rite. Thus the syrian community gained superior position within and without the catholic church. At the same time it had to withdraw to its shell leaving alone the mandate of preaching the gospel to the world and evangelizing the nations. The attempts made by some of the missionaries in Kerala to bring to the Syrian christian fold some of the low caste was met with great hostility from the church hierarchy and others. The attempts made by Palakunnel Valiachan at Mannanam and Thevarkad Kunjachan of Ramapuram¹² are

11 La Crcse, *Histoire du Christianisme des Inds. Tom I* La Hye, 1758, pp. 142-143.

12 Palakunnel Valliachan was born in February 1831 to Ittiduria and Pallikyaveetil Mariam. Young Mathew went to Mannanam for his clerical studies and became a priest in 1885. His diary (Nalagamam) describes the difficulties he had to face from the aristocrats of his community when he tried to convert the lower castes. His desire for native bishops even led him to side with Mellucion schism for sometime. He even criticised bishops Pazhayaparambil and Lavigne for their attitude of conciliation towards the Portuguese. Thevarkad Kunjachan, otherwise called Ramapuram Kunjachan, worked among the low castes who now consider him a saint.

examples of futile individual initiatives to bring low caste persons into the Syrian christian fold. Meanwhile a large number of Syrian Christians moved by missionary zeal joined latin rite Dioceses and religious congregations both inside and outside Kerala as they were inspired by the gospel value of evangelization. In Kerala the Syrian church became more and more stabilised within the social hierarchy, but stagnated with respect to the christian ideals. The church expansion they achieved both in Kerala and outside was not a result of any missionary movement, but of population explosion within the Syrian christian community. When density of population increased among the Syrian christian communities of Travancore, they migrated to other parts of Kerala in search of land and settled down there and started new christian communities. In Malabar and parts of Cochin these communities are found. Educated Syrian christians settled down in Metropolitan cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras etc. and formed Syrian Christian communities there. After independence when the caste system weakened and society was more modernized the Syrian christians too started shedding some of their caste customs and taking to modern ways, while holding strongly to the rite-caste purity in their relation with the lower caste and the Latin rite people.

The Syrian Christian community sacrificed the gospel message in their over-concern for social status and power. The caste ridden Syrian Christians are an example of a community where a religious faith gets swallowed up by a strong social structure which forced it to take a strong defensive stand throughout, and led it to socio-religious stagnation. Thus it failed to live up to its religious ideals for want of socio-structural independence. After independence when the Syrian Christians realized the need for missionary expansion, the socio-religious climate in India changed. The Latin Church with its large investment in men and materials from the west together with the human resources from the south, especially Kerala, had already grown into a great power on the Indian continent in general and in the Christian churches in particular. After independence Hindu religious revivalism and fundamentalist movements made it impossible for missionaries to create and lead large scale missionary movements. Being unskilled and inexperienced in missionary

activities, the Syrian churches met with failure in recent attempts to expand. The expansion was warranted as they found themselves having only a second position in the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. They failed to rise to the first position in the Indian ecclesiastical circles for want of majority and lack of unity among themselves. Their unity in Kerala has always been threatened by regional rivalries and sectarian competition for supremacy within the Syrian rite. The fight among themselves and against the mighty Latin church in India has pushed them to a very sad situation. The latest weapon in their hands is the new Code of Canons of the Eastern churches which prevent the Syrians in Kerala to opt for Latin Dioceses and Latin religious congregations. Prior to this action they made themselves independent and gained autonomy within the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. All these measures would lead to less and less socio-religious and political mobility and more and more stagnation for the community. In Kerala the church should have a Kerala face with an Indian back drop. We shall be making the same mistake the 'Latin' and 'Oriental' rites made when they imported their cultures along with the faith in Jesus Christ, fusing them to the point that culture and faith were hardly distinguishable. No doubt, incarnation should be inculturation and while fostering what is good in each culture for the expression of one's faith, faith should not be made the product of a cultural heritage. Wisdom lies in appreciating the faith-inspired culture rather than culture-inspired faith.

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Worshipping in Spirit and Truth Liturgical Traditions in the Church

This article traces the history of the origin and development of liturgical traditions in the church, and comes to the important conclusion that unity and diversity, uniformity and polyvalence, continuity and discontinuity, fidelity to tradition and break with it characterise the story of christian liturgies. The dynamics at work: different cultural contexts, different historical-political situations, presence of creative personalities.

Introduction

The Lord has announced a new era of worshipping in spirit and truth when he said to the Samaritan woman: "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshippers worship in spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:23-24). But the history of Christian worship reveals that there were moments of history when the Church lived gloriously in accordance with this dream and vision of the Lord and there were times when the church fell away from this ideal of worshipping in 'spirit and truth'.

Vatican II was a great landmark in the history of Christian worship and its renewal. The Council decreed that "the liturgical rites be carefully and thoroughly revised in the light of tradition that they may be given a new vigour to meet the circumstances and needs of modern times" (SC 4) and to make "the Church observances which are open to adaptation, more responsive to the requirements of our times" (SC 1). In fact when Vatican II announced a programme for "restoring and fostering liturgy" (SC 1, 3), it was only affirming the fact that the liturgical traditions and practices in the Church had fallen

short of the ideal of the Lord and that the Church had failed in fulfilling the command of the Lord to worship in spirit and truth.

Today there are some eight main liturgical traditions, families, namely, the Roman, Byzantine, Antiochian, East Syrian, Maronite, Armenian, Ethiopian and Coptic liturgies, shared by the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches. Each of them developed in the different socio-political and ecclesial context with a variety of rites and rituals, theology and spirituality.

This article is an attempt to survey the history of the liturgy and the development of the liturgical traditions (families)¹ to see how far this vision of the Lord has been realized in the Church down through the centuries.

Principle of liturgical continuity and discontinuity

From the outset we should acknowledge that a double dimension of continuity and discontinuity constitutes the basic principle of development in the history of Christian worship. Unity and diversity, uniformity and polyvalence, obedience to tradition and break with tradition are inherent in the history of the development of liturgy. The different traditions and families in liturgy have developed through the establishment of the various liturgical rites, rituals, practices, texts, theology and spirituality proper to them, through a process of continuity and discontinuity: through obedience to and break with tradition, by continuation of and shift from the past. Some of these occurred as a result of change of personalities and their vision; some because of change in doctrine, theology and spirituality; and some followed changes in ecclesial structures and authority patterns, some came with the change of cultural context and religious sensibilities, others with the change of language. Wainwright says: "In face of all the structural continuities of ritual history, however, it is important to recognize that the living performance, the religious "feel" and the theological understanding of the rites have varied in different ages and places, in keeping with the general evolution

1 Generally different liturgical traditions are grouped into different families. Many such grouping made by scholars are proved to be not completely accurate, and even traditions which have not much in common have been grouped under one family. Hence we think it is safer to use the expression liturgical traditions rather than families.

of the Church's life and thought and its social and cultural context''².

The phases of history of the liturgy

Division of history into different periods depends very much on the approach we take in defining the events which delimit these periods. This is true also of liturgical history. The history of liturgy is a complex reality. The stand point and approach vary depending on the objectives of the analysis.

Our main concern in this study of the history of the development of the different liturgical traditions is to see the continuities and discontinuities in liturgical traditions and to identify the moments of transition and transformation, shifts, breaks and changes which led to the diversification of the traditions and also to find the invariable constants that unite the different traditions.

To have a comprehensive understanding of these parameters of change and transformation, we have to go into the different periods of the history of each liturgical family in detail. But such an exhaustive analysis is beyond the limits of this study. We shall limit our study to a brief survey of the general history of the origins and development of liturgical traditions.

Here too we limit ourselves to the first four centuries of the shaping of the liturgies and the development of the different liturgical families in the fourth-fifth century. In short, ours shall be a limited survey to find out how polyvalent traditions developed in the history of liturgy and how far they have been faithful to the command of the Lord to worship in spirit and truth.

Sources for the survey of the early christian worship

As far as the history of liturgy is concerned, we have only meagre documentation for the first centuries. Hence it is difficult to know the exact shape of early liturgical practices or the living contexts in which the rites, ritual, texts or practices originated. Wainwright writes: "The problem here is in finding the *juste milieu*: on the one hand, one must beware of

2 Geoffrey Wainwright, in Ch. Jones et al, ed, *The Study of Liturgy*, General Introduction, p. 33,

importing too easily into the apostolic age elements whose certain attestation dates only from the second or third centuries, on the other, one must give due weight to the possibility that some theological statements in the NT reflect liturgical practices that were already current in the very early days³.

Here we distinguish between the pre-Nicene sources and those of the fourth and fifth centuries. As for first three centuries, the most important documents are *Didache* (100 AD)⁴, *Apology of St. Justin* (150 AD)⁵, *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome (215 AD), *Teaching of the Apostles (Didascalia Apostolorum)*: early third century), the later *Apostolic Constitutions* (c. 400 AD) and the *Anaphora of Adai and Mari* (3rd cent). To these may be added the Acts of St. Thomas which gives us abundant description and formularies about baptism and Eucharist and hints at the shape of these rites in the Syro-Mesopotamian traditions.

The sources become more abundant from the middle of the fourth century. The chief among these are the *Mystagogical Catecheses* which are of great value for the understanding of the liturgical history in the fourth century. The most important among them are those delivered by Cyril of Jerusalem (347). They are instructions given to the newly baptized to acquaint them with the mysteries or sacraments. The liturgical homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the next century (428) and *De Mysteriis* of Ambrose of Milan also belong to this category of catechetical instructions. In all these there are lengthy explanations of the Eucharistic celebration and its theology as it was understood by the authors. *Euchology of Serapion* is a collection of prayers, as the name denotes, attributed to Serapion of Thmuis friend of St. Athanasius, who died around 360 AD. It contains some thirty prayers meant for different liturgical celebrations among which the most important is a complete text of the anaphora⁶.

3 Geoffrey Wainwright, in *Liturgy Today*, pp. 34

4 Rodrof and A Tuiller, *Didache*, SC 248, Paris, (Cerf) 1978,

5 St. Justin, *Apologia I*, 61 and 65-67, ed. L. Pautigni, *Texts et Documents 1* Paris, 1904

6 F. E. Brightman (ed), "The Sacramentary of Serapion of Thmuis", *JTS* 1 (1899-1900), 88-108.

From the fifth century onwards we have more abundant sources. They give us information extensive enough to show the existence of the different liturgical families. For this period of the formation of the different liturgical traditions we have the important Eucharistic prayers as witnesses. Thus we have the liturgy of Hippolytus of Rome, the Roman Canon (Roman tradition), the Anaphora of Adai and Mari (East Syrian), Peter the Apostle (Maronite), Theodore of Mopsuestia (East Syrian), Nestorius (East Syrian), the Anaphora of St. Mark the Evangelist (Egyptian), Anaphora of St. James (Jerusalem, Antioch), St. Basil (Cappadocian), St. John Chrysostom (Byzantine), Gregory Nazianzen (Egyptian, Armenian), Athanasius (Armenian), of the Twelve Apostles (Antiochian). They reveal the story of symbiosis and mutual borrowing.

Pre-Nicene traditions

We have already indicated the sources for the study of this period from the beginning of the 2nd to the middle of the 4th century. We shall base our study on a few from the documents we have mentioned above, namely, *Didache*, *Apology of Justin*, *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome, *Anaphora of Adai and Mari*, *Apostolic Constitutions* and the *Euchology of Serapion*. We start our analysis with a little description of these sources.

Didache or the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (AD 100) contains information regarding baptism, *agape*, Eucharist, Sunday celebrations, fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and offices in the early Christian communities. The most important data it provides is the description of the Eucharistic celebrations on Sundays and of baptism.

Apology of Justin the Martyr (AD 150) gives us important information about baptism and Eucharist. The order of the Eucharistic celebration, found in the First Apology (65-67), more extensive than the description in *Didache*, was complete and apparently determinative for the celebration of the Eucharist in later centuries.

The *Apostolic Tradition* (215 AD) of Hippolytus of Rome gives us ample information about the liturgical life of the Church of Rome regarding baptism, Eucharist, ordinations, *agape* meal,

daily prayers and different blessings in the beginning of the 3rd century. It represents the traditions of Rome, but much influenced by the tradition from the East.

The Anaphora of Adai and Mari (3rd Cent) represents the celebration of the Eucharist in the East Syrian Tradition. This originated in the Judeo-Christian communities of the Syro-Mesopotamian region outside the hellenistic influence of Antioch, Alexandria and Rome.

Apostolic Constitutions (c. 400 AD) is a compilation of earlier liturgical documents, within the perspective of the time of the author. It consists of eight books. The first six books contain revised edition of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* while the Book VII is a revised version of *Didache* representing also the tradition of the times. The most important part of the work is Book VIII which contains a complete text of the oriental form of liturgy. This text is generally known as the Clementine liturgy, because in the 16th century scholars believed that in this they possessed the work of Pope Clement. But Clementine liturgy is a landmark in the history of liturgy and represents a phase of the development of the oriental form of liturgy.

Here we focus on the Eucharistic liturgy alone. The four last mentioned documents represent four liturgical traditions. *Didache* and Justin are witnesses to the Judeo-Christian origins of the Eucharistic prayers and are models. The text in *Didache* is succinct, while Justin is more developed.

Of the other four documents *Apostolic Tradition* represents the tradition in Rome at the time of Hippolytus, before the complication of the later years. The phrasing of the text is by Hippolytus himself; but the structure of the prayer and some of the actual wording could be of earlier Roman tradition. He himself says that it represents the tradition as it was in his youth.

The Anaphora of Adai and Mari represents a pure semitic tradition developed on the model of *Didache* and Justin, in the context of Edessa. It represents the Chaldean or Syro-Mesopotamian tradition which today we call East Syrian.

The prayer in the *Euchology* of Serapion, though of later origin, represents the Egyptian tradition of the eucharistic prayer. There is enough indication that the present text is the revision of an earlier, pre-Nicene text.

The *Apostolic Constitution* was created to serve as a model for eucharistic prayers at the celebration. It represents a Syrian tradition. And in later centuries it served as a model for the making of the Byzantine liturgy also.

Hence we have *four different models* of the Eucharistic prayers, representing four important traditions: of Rome, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Syria. In itself each of them may have different layers of tradition with each prayer pointing to different practices, rites, rituals and theology. In the following centuries, more Eucharistic prayers were made on these models, but with change of structure, wording, theology and spirituality.

Development of the liturgical families (4th-5th centuries)

Since the Church had adapted its own administrative framework on the model of the civil administrative system, the great cultural and political centres started to exert growing influence on ecclesiastical activities paving the way to a sort of centralization around these centres. As far as liturgy is concerned, this led to a kind of imposition of the traditions of the centre on the local traditions. Slowly well defined liturgical families developed under the great centres.

Rome, Antioch and Alexandria were the most important churches of the pre-Nicene times. Rome remained the great centre of the Roman empire until the development of the Byzantine Empire by 395. In the eastern Roman empire there developed two main centres of Antioch and Alexandria. They were great cosmopolitan cities and were highly hellenized, in spite of the fact that the Jewish communities in these cities were great and very influential whose existence affected the Christian Churches there.

Constantinople, the capital of the new empire, called the Rome of the East or New Rome, had no earlier Christian tradition. Hence it would borrow a lot from Antioch, especially in liturgical matters. The best example is the influence of John Chrysostom on the Byzantine Church and its liturgy. This newly established see of Constantinople declared itself a Patriarchal see on a par with Rome, Antioch and Alexandria. Byzantium had great rivalry with Alexandria. Hence Alexandria systematically resisted any byzantinization of the Egyptian liturgy. This has helped to preserve

and even to develop the two traditions of the Coptic and Ethiopian liturgies, distinct from the influence of Antioch and Constantinople.

The liturgy of Jerusalem which had become a great pilgrim centre by the fourth century had profound influence on the various liturgies of the East and West. Hence the liturgy of St. James, which had its origin in Jerusalem became the liturgy of the Antiochian, Byzantine and Armenian churches.

Outside the Roman empire, in the Syro-Mesopotamian region in the Persian Empire, there developed a liturgy unaffected by the hellenizing influence of the Antiochian and Alexandrian traditions, around Edessa and Nisibis. This tradition has given birth to the Syro-Mesopotamian or Assyro-Chaldean liturgy, which we call East Syrian and Maronite liturgies. Similarly, independent of the hellenizing tendency, the traditions of the Armenian liturgy developed from the liturgical patrimony bequeathed by the great Cappadocian fathers.

East Syrian liturgy

Until recent times scholars considered the East Syrian liturgy, a branch of the Antiochian liturgy and classified it together with the Maronite liturgy as originating from Antiochian liturgy. However, contemporary scholars are of opinion that the East Syrian and Maronite liturgies are independent developments of an ancient Edessian liturgy, and have not much in common with the Antiochian liturgy.

The name East Syrian has been given to this liturgical tradition because in contrast to the Antiochian liturgy which uses the West Syrian language this liturgy uses East Syrian language. The similarity in certain aspects of the liturgy in the later centuries have made scholars to think that this is a branch of the Antiochian tradition. But in fact it is essentially of semitic origin and has preserved much of its semitic traits which it acquired from its original setting of the Judeo-Christian communities.

East Syrian liturgy had its origin and early stages of its growth in the Jewish centres of Mesopotamia. It is the two great centres of learning Edessa and Nisibis which has given the theological foundations to the East Syrian liturgy.

The anaphora of Adai and Mari which dates from the third century is the basic liturgical text of this tradition. This very

well shows the Jewish heritage and relation in contrast with the liturgical texts of Theodore of Mopsuestia and of Nestorius.

The Maronite liturgy

The Maronite liturgy also is generally classified by scholars as originating from the Antiochian liturgy. However, this is a misconception. As we have already mentioned, the Maronite liturgy, like the East Syrian liturgy, has developed from a common liturgical stock which has close association with Edessa. The Maronite anaphora of the Apostle Peter has much in common with the Anaphora of Adai and Mari. It is a good witness of the Judeo-Christian origin of the source of the Maronite liturgy. The Maronite church has resisted all attempts of Byzantinization, but in the course of the last centuries it has been very much romanized.

The Armenian liturgy

According to Amadouni⁷ the message of the Gospel reached Armenia through two doors, from the south through Syria and from the West through Cappadocia. Hence there were also two streams of liturgical tradition which found their way to Armenia, the Syriac tradition and the Cappadocian tradition.

By the fourth century the official conversion of Armenia to Christianity took place through the influence of St. Gregory the Illuminator, who established the hierarchy. He brought to Armenia missionaries from the Cappadocian church. Hence the Cappadocian tradition enjoyed preference in the young Armenian Church. The Armenian hierarchy itself was linked with the Church of Cappadocia during the fourth century. This explains why the ancient liturgy of St. Basil the Great, already in use in the fourth century, was maintained almost in its pristine purity until the end of the 5th century.

With the 5th century the Armenian alphabet was invented and it replaced both the Syriac and Greek language. The Armenian Church has developed its liturgy through a fusion of pre-existing Syriac and Cappadocian traditions with properly Armenian additions. The liturgy of St. Basil remained the basis. But it was

7 Garabed Amadouni, "The Divine liturgy or Canon of Ministration according to the Armenian rite", in John Madei, *The Eucharistic Liturgy in the Christian East*, Kottayam, 1982.

enriched by prayers borrowed from the liturgy of St. Chrysostom and from the Syrian tradition.

But contemporary Armenian liturgy has been much transformed through the centuries. There has been a strong movement of hellenization and love for the greek culture in Armenia from the seventh to the eleventh centuries.

The Antiochian tradition and the West Syrian liturgy

At present the Syrian Orthodox and the Catholic Syrian communities of Near East and the Syrian Orthodox and the Syro-Malankara Church of Kerala follow the Antiochian rite, which originated in the Church of Antioch.

In Syria the Church of Antioch claimed and was accorded a primacy, sometime before the end of the second century. But for variety of reasons this authority was never properly exercised, as Alexandria exercised its primacy over the other Egyptian churches. From the prehistoric times Syria was a mosaic of different races, cultures, religions and languages, which, in contrast to Egypt, no political framework has ever held together for long. The Seleucid kings of Antioch tried to bring some unity in Syria through hellenization, but they did not succeed.

The Patriarch of Antioch also attempted the same path of hellenization for bringing unity. But there were pockets of resistance to the hellenizing tendencies and Antiochian domination. In the face of the overwhelming power of Rome and Byzantium they could only express themselves in terms of doctrinal heresy culminating in schism. Hence there were two revolts in the course of time, first the East Syrian revolt in the 5th century and the Maronite revolt in the 8th century. It is not surprising that this background of abiding cultural divisions and local separatism should have left its mark on liturgy.

The old liturgy of Antioch

We have little information about the old liturgy of Antioch. The liturgy which was in use in the patriarchate of Antioch was the liturgy of St. James. However, St. James is not the old liturgy of Antioch. Liturgy of St. James, as it stands today, is closer to the 4th century rite of Jerusalem, which was adapted to the

Antiochian Church in the 5th century, probably between 400 and 430 AD.

Though the patriarchs introduced the Jerusalem liturgy into North Syria, they did not remain faithful to it. They later abandoned it in favour of a Greek version of the liturgy of St. Basil. Later they became more Byzantinized. Thus the liturgy of James is not of antiochian origin nor of long use by its patriarchs.

North West Syria

The churches of North west Syria also adopted the liturgy of St. James. Though the structure and framework of the liturgy was preserved, the text was not preserved. Instead some seventy alternative eucharistic prayers were created in this region, composed from the fourth-fifth century to the fifteenth.

Egyptian / Alexandrian tradition

Alexandria, Antioch and Rome were the three most important churches of pre-Nicene times. Alexandria always held a place of honour and authority over the other Churches of Egypt. Though there was a cleavage in language and culture between the native Copts and the immigrant Greeks, Egypt always has been a self-conscious unity under Alexandria centuries before the origins of Christianity. The unchallenged supremacy of the bishop of Alexandria over all the churches of Egypt was the Christian expression of the enduring socio-political and geographical reality.

The Byzantine liturgy

The Byzantine liturgy is followed by the greatest number of Christians of the East in the different churches of the Byzantine rite, both of catholic and Eastern Orthodox communion. Today it is celebrated, with many local variations, in the Eastern Orthodox patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem and the autocephalous Orthodox churches of Russia, Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, Czechoslovakia, America and the catholic Ukrainian, Rumanian, Ruthenian, Hungarian, Slovak, Bulgarian, Russian, Greek, Italo-Albanese, Byelorussian, Georgian and the Greek Melkite Churches of the catholic communion. Originally Greek was the liturgical language. Today it is celebrated in Greek, Russian, Georgian, Slavonic, Syriac and other local languages, and even in English, Japanese and Chinese.

The Byzantine rite is also generally called the Greek rite. But we should distinguish it from those ancient Greek rites, which have disappeared or which follow a language other than Greek. This rite and liturgy are known by the name Byzantine because it was in Byzantium, i.e., Constantinople, that it developed between the 4th and the 10th century.

When Constantinople became the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and the see of Constantinople took upon itself the title of patriarchate and declared itself on a par with Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in the 4th century, it did not have a liturgical tradition of its own. It borrowed abundantly from the liturgical traditions of Jerusalem, through the Churches and liturgies of Antioch and Cappadocia. But in course of time Constantinople developed a liturgical tradition of its own, as those who presided over the liturgical celebrations of the patriarchate were great saints and literary men of great calibre like St. Basil of Caesaria, John Chrysostom, John Damascene, Maximus the Confessor and many others.

Three liturgies are used today in the Byzantine rite: liturgy of St. Basil, liturgy of John Chrysostom and the liturgy of the pre-sanctified, or liturgy of St. Gregory. St. Basil of Caesaria has played a very important role in the early development of the liturgy. Though we do not know if the liturgy attributed to him is of his own creation, it is known in his name. The liturgy of the pre-sanctified first appeared in the Church in the 7th century and is attributed to Gregory the Great. But how far this attribution is valid is still a question to be answered. But the liturgy the most used is that of John Chrysostom under whom the Byzantine liturgy flourished during the period between 398 and 404.

Closing words

We have tried, in the preceding pages, to trace the history of the origin and development of the different liturgical traditions and families. Our study was mainly focused on the first five centuries. We have distinguished two phases in the history of the development. First, the period from AD 200 to the Council of Nicea, which we called pre-Nicene tradition. We have based ourselves on six documents of which four represent well-developed eucharistic prayers. In them we have identified four

different traditions, namely the Roman, the Egyptian, the Syrian and the Mesopotamian.

Coming to the middle of the fourth century there is more documentation, especially the different eucharistic prayers. By the second half of the 4th century Constantinople came to be established; and Jerusalem, with its anaphora of St. James, became one of the important sources for other traditions. With the establishment of the patriarchate there was a sort of centralization, but the rivalry between the different sees helped the establishment of more traditions. Thus by the 5th century we have Byzantine liturgy coming into existence, drawing on the traditions of Antioch and Jerusalem. In the mean time the Egyptian tradition developed with Alexandria as its centre, but from it two different liturgies sprang up: the Ethiopian and Coptic traditions. Similarly, from the Edessan or Mesopotamian tradition, developed the East Syrian and Maronite liturgical traditions.

What the different anaphoras and their use reveals, is that there has been a lot of mutual sharing and enriching. At the same time it shows that change of tradition happens with borrowings and change of personalities. The Byzantine liturgy is influenced by Cappadocian through Basil; and Antiochian traditions, through John Chrysostom, while the Antiochian liturgy of James is from Jerusalem. Similarly we find that Roman canon and the Egyptian and Alexandrian anaphoras have much in common. There is much in common too between the Maronite liturgy of St. Peter the Apostle and the anaphora of Adai and Mari. The whole development of the other sacraments, rituals, breviary, liturgical year etc. will in turn show same results.

Our brief survey of history of the development of the traditions points to the fact that there are different moments of shift, change and break with the past and that there are certain important turning points in the history of each liturgical tradition. Hence we would affirm, what we proposed in the beginning of this article: continuity and discontinuity, unity and diversity, uniformity and polyvalence, obedience to the tradition and break with the tradition are inherent in the history of liturgy.

Worship in Spirit and Truth

Samuel Rayan, Editor of the issue, in this article evaluates the present Liturgy in the broad biblical perspectives and indicates directions for its radical reform. Anyway, we have to go beyond inane debates on ritual trivia and to grasp the true meaning of worship in spirit and truth. Life is greater than all rites and liturgies and temples and so Jesus chose table-fellowship with outcasts as the new symbolic centre of the community. In practice, we as a Church should be free enough with the freedom of the children of God to so design liturgies and church structures as to make of the present chaos a world brimming with life, freedom and dignity.

A Samaritan woman said to Jesus:

I see you are a prophet. You could instruct me.

Where may we encounter God and offer worship?

Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, Gerizim;

but your people destroyed our temple here, some hundred and fifty years ago. You Jews say Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.

Jesus replied:

Neither in Gerizim nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. It is time that true worshippers worship in spirit and truth.

I. God is Spirit and Life

God is spirit and freedom, God is no localised thing. God is not bound to any mountain or temple or direction; not to the east, nor to the west nor the southwest. The Jews worshipped in Jerusalem or turned towards Jerusalem when they prayed elsewhere, just as Muslims when they pray turn towards Mecca. The Greeks, the Romans and most ancient peoples worshipped towards the east. They regarded the place of the rising sun as the source of life, power and happiness. The rising sun became a symbol of divinity. "From this it was only a short step to deify the sun itself, and

that was often the case." (Jungmann 1959: 134) Greek and Roman temples as a rule faced east so as to let the rays of the rising sun fall upon the idol when the door of the temple was opened in the mornings. Christians too, from the second century at least, prayed facing east and oriented both public and private prayer places. The priest at prayer stood facing the east and the door of the church and the people and the altar. But the people had to turn their back to the altar and priest in order to face east while praying. In some places, not everywhere, this was deemed inconvenient, and churches began to be built with the apse towards the east and door towards the west, and the people and priest faced the altar and the east. Now the whole congregation was like a procession led by the priest and moving towards the sun. This practice was strengthened when Christ began to be symbolised by the sun (id. 135-137).

But Christ is also symbolized by the lamb and the lion and the bread and the vine and the way, the door, the shepherd and the amen. The risen Christ went north from Jerusalem and promised to meet his disciples in Galilee (Mt 28:10, 16; Mk 16:7). The risen Lord is with his disciples as they go in all directions speaking his Word among all the nations. And wherever two or three meet in his name he is there among them irrespective of the direction they face together, or whether they face one another (Mt 28:19-20; 18:19-20). In fact Christ is in every starved man and deprived woman and hungry child; and in all the stripped, the despoiled and the broken, regardless of what the compass says. The Eucharist, the central act of christian worship is not a procession but a shared meal with historical roots in the table-fellowship Jesus practised with his disciples and with the impoverished and the outcast of his society. This bread-sharing of his was symbolic every time of his self-giving unto death for their liberation; symbolic no less of the new community of socially dissenting friends and equals which he was creating as the seed of a new earth and a new history.

God surely is in the east, though that is not his only address. The catechism says God is everywhere. Psalm 139 gives expression to an intense experience of God's omnipresence. Shall I go to the west to escape God's Spirit, and to flee from God's presence?

If I scale the heavens you are there.
 If I lie flat in Sheol, there you are.
 If I speed away on the wings of the dawn,
 If I dwell beyond the ocean,
 even there your hand will be guiding me,
 your right hand holding me fast.

Our ancestors knew that 'this whole', this universe, is pervaded by the Lord. Arjuna was told in the battle field of Kurukshetra that the Lord dwells in the heart of every created reality. (Isa Upanishad; Bhagavadgita). The truth is that the God who made the world does not make his home in shrines and basilicas made by human hands (Acts 17:24-25). The truth is that in God we live and move and exist; in whatever direction we turn we are face to face with God. In God we home. And if we would express that presence and face-to-faceness symbolically, then God's finest symbol/image is the human person, and especially the community of those who constitute the Body of him who is *the* Image of the living God and *the* Sacrament of divine presence in our midst (Col 1:15; Hb 1:3). The Presence is further mediated by our Christ-like neighbour and the Christ-community who identify themselves with the crucified of today. Facing east rests on religious cosmology, facing Jerusalem hinges on salvation history, and facing one another, on the mystery of the Body of Christ which is the community of bread-sharing.

Such basic biblical perspectives could help us grasp the meaning of worship in spirit and truth, and get beyond inane debates on ritual trivia. But in his reply to the Samaritan woman Jesus was not only redefining the temple. He was repudiating it together with the entire cultic system connected with it; and he was replacing it with his Body (Jn 2:20-22). It was not rare for Jesus to discuss cultic matters like sacrifice, sabbath, fasting, tithes, ablutions, vows. In every case the aim was their subversion. The Sabbath, for instance, is for human beings; it is meant not to oppress and shackle people but to promote their well-fare and growth in humanity and happiness. Jesus "stripped the sabbath of magico-cosmological traces" and made it "a day for humanity, for justice and mercy and freedom" (Avila:39). What pleases God is not sacrifice but justice, mercy and faithfulness; not minute observance of pharisaic rules of exclusion but compassionate acceptance of the outcast and the

sinner (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Mt 9:12; 12:7; Hos. 6:6). God needs no gifts from us. "Rather, it is God who gives everything... to everyone (Ac 17:25). If God were hungry he would not appeal to us; the animals of the mountain and the birds in the air are his (Ps 50:9-15). Not we but God is the great Giver, Offerer and Sacrificer. He loves the world so much as to give it his only Child for its salvation, to add heart to it, to rebuild its freedom, to broaden and clarify its visions, to share its wounds, to clothe it in tenderness and to give it wings (Jn 3:16-17). Our sacrifice will consist in sharing God's gifts with one another. Therefore when I approach the altar with my offering and remember that I am not on good terms with a brother or a sister, I must pause, turn back and go first to make up with the sister/brother. Only then can I have a God to encounter and worship. Till then my situation is atheistic. There is a divine blackout. God refuses to be there for me. That God is there for me as my God is any day a wondrous free gift (Mt 5:23; cf Micah 3:1-4). Jesus attacked formalism and verbosity in prayer and insisted on worship by praxis. Deeds, not words, are crucial. What one does, the history one forges in tune with God is authentic worship (Mt 7:21-23; Ro 12:1). Sharing, not fasting, is the attitude that befits the newness of the Reign of God (Mk 2:18-22; 6:30-46; Isa. 58). For Jesus things are not pure or impure by themselves independently of personal acts (Mt 15:10-20; Mk 7:14-23). Jesus condemns evading of responsibility to parents by dedicating possessions to the temple — a practice encouraged by those who were its beneficiaries (Mt 15:1-9; Mk 7:9-13); (Avila: 36-38).

This consistent criticisms of religion and cult culminated in Jesus' repudiation of the temple with its priestly authority, its sacrificial system, its political power and its accumulated capital. In Jesus' analysis, the temple was the central mechanism of the country's political economy. Instead of acting as a redistributive system to secure socio-economic justice within the community of Israel the temple accumulated capital, and directly oppressed the poor by cultic obligations they could not meet. "Land-ownership concentrated into the hands of those already privileged by the system." All this was robbery of the poor; the temple had become the domain of thieves (Mk 11:17). The rich grew rich by defrauding the poor. An illustration of this

is had in the systemic inducement that led an impoverished widow to put her last coin and her whole living into a treasury bursting with wealth. Jesus uttered a lament over her (Mk 12: 41-44); (Myers 1988: 433).

Jesus' central ideological struggle was with the temple-state. "The temple system and its political economy represented the heart of what was wrong with the dominant system." It therefore had to die. And the people had to be reassured "that God's existence was not tied to the temple" (Myers: 80). "As the oppressive colonial power represented by the "legion" had to be symbolically driven" into the sea" (Mk 5:9-13), so too the commercial interests of the temple had to be "exorcised" and the temple mount ordered "into the sea" (Mk 11:23). People will then see that "a symbolic life can and should be reconstructed apart from the temple-based order" (id: 411).

The meaning of all this is that life is larger than temples, liturgies and rites. The meaning is that it is right to give life on the Sabbath, and lay cult aside in order to serve people in need (Mk 3:1-6; Lk 13:10-17; Jn 5:1-18). Hence the poignancy and relevance of the question: in all our debate about rites and liturgies, and about major and minor archbishops, where do the poor figure? and the cause of the oppressed? and the cry of the down-trodden? Will locating God in the east or the south, signing ourselves in semitic fashion from right to left, or substituting one royal robe for another help alter the condition of the dispossessed, or place some rice on their empty place, or reduce a bit the injustice heaped on women? Reform of liturgies and restructuring of rites have to cut far deeper and come to grips with the earthly human meaning of Breaking Bread which alone can enshrine and communicate its earthly divine meaning; and grapple with the meaning of recalling a passover and an exodus; and with the meaning of proclaiming the death of the Lord in the midst of endless death inflicted on people.

This concern is vital to the gospel in which the temple is replaced by the Body of Christ "as the new symbolic centre", the new place of encounter with God. This is indicated "by the symbols of the last meal", and will be made explicit at the moment of Jesus' death when the "destruction" of Jesus' body is juxtaposed to the "destruction" of the sanctuary curtain. (Myers: 375)

When Jesus dies on the cross not only are the powers pulled from their thrones (the sun darkens), but the symbolic order itself is overthrown (temple curtain is rent). The curtained Holy of Holies symbolizes the ideological justification for priestly elitism: in this order Yahweh is exclusive (reclusive?), dwelling "apart from and above" the people, mediated by priests. That which divides the people from Yahweh also divides them from each other: the priest also lives "apart and above". Thus the destruction of the curtain symbolizes the end of such an order... The "absence" of (Jesus') body from the tomb is the last word; the corpse does not need to be properly buried... because the new order has dawned. Moreover, that "body" becomes the centre of the new order in the eucharistic feast — those who partake of it are "contaminated" with the subversive memory of Jesus." (Myers: 432)

Recalling the two compartments in the Jewish sanctuary, separated by a curtain, the writer of Hebrews says: "By this the Holy Spirit means us to see that as long as the old tent stands the way into the holy place is not opened up..." But now Christ has passed through... the more perfect tent... and entered the sanctuary" (Hbr 9:1-12). Christ "has opened up for us a new way", "a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, his flesh" (Hbr 10:19). Jesus is indeed the Way (Jn 14:6). Therefore "we have complete confidence through the blood of Jesus in entering the sanctuary... So, as we go in, let us be sincere in heart..." (Hbr 10:19-22). Through Jesus believers "have free access to the Father" (Eph 2:13-18). Therefore "in him we are bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him" (Eph 3:12). The destruction of the temple curtain at the moment of Christ's death has profound significance. No curtain, no clericalism, may stand in the way of people's free access to the Father.

The 'house of prayer for all', become a few bandits' den, is abandoned. Jesus' attack on the temple (Mk 11:15-19) 'concludes with a "new" site for prayer'. This new site is not geographical nor institutional, but ethical, social and mystical. The new site is faith in God and mutual forgiveness of debt and offence within the community, together with renunciation of power, privileges and inequalities (Mk 11:22-25). Here Jesus

is teaching that "the temple is not necessary in order for Yahweh to dwell among the people". His death has reconciled us to God and to one another, the temple curtain is rent, the old order is democratized, the legitimacy of scribal, pharisaic and priestly mediators is undermined, and God is present in the community which now becomes the priesthood and the place of prayer for all peoples (Myers: 443, 306).

"Faith in the God-who-is-not-in-the-temple means that the disciple should also repudiate the temple-state." Faith will wait upon the end of the power and legitimacy of the Roman 'legion' and the temple 'mountain'. For to believe is to hold on to the possibility of a new social order. "Faith entails political imagination, the ability to envision a world that is not dominated by the powers." (Myers: 305).

At the heart of this alternative faith vision lies a 'radically new symbolic system' based not upon sacred rituals and sacrifices to deity, but 'upon the primacy of human need' (Mk 2:13-28; 3:4; Jn 5:1-18; 9). Jesus' struggle against debt and hunger, against exploitation and inequality, against hierarchism and domination of every kind; his feeding and healing ministries, his socialising with outcasts, his repudiation of oppressive power systems; and his consistent dissent from the subversion of the dominant culture are as much part of his worship of the Father as are his prayers on lonely mountains and in solitary morning hours, or his loud cries and tears in the watches of the night, and his suffering and death.

Jesus chose table-fellowship with outcasts, sinners, peasants and fish-workers and marginal people as "the new symbolic centre" of the community. In place of the temple is a simple meal which represents participation in Jesus' 'body' (Mk 14:22-25). Ched Myers observes that it is the meal, not the 'body', that is "holy", for the latter is 'absent' at the end of the story (Mk 16:6-8; Lk 24:1-12). We are left then not with a sacred ritual but with the social event of table fellowship. "This meal, which itself is an expropriation of the great liberation symbols of the Pass-over, is meant to bring to mind the entire messianic programme of justice and the cost of fidelity to it. But it is a meal for a community on flight, or, more accurately, a community that

follows its true centre, Jesus, which cannot be institutionalised because he is always ahead of us on the road'' (Myers: 443).

II. Liturgy

Park Jae Soon describes the Jesus Movement as ''a Table Community Movement that shared bread with the hungry; and as a Serving Movement that proclaimed the principle of serving the oppressed; and as a Life Restoration Movement that brought the cripples and the mentally ill to full and abundant life''. Collective and communal, the movement ''responded to the collective suffering of the sick, the hungry, the oppressed'' (Soon, 1993: 60). Of this Kingdom of God movement, the church is a conscious sector. Hence the goal and purpose of the church's activities and services will be the promotion of God's kingdom on the earth. The church will strive to get as many persons and peoples as possible to do God's will in all spheres and relations of life, economic, political, social and cultural. It will devote all efforts to the shaping of a deep and comprehensive culture of justice and love; and work towards the emergence of a new humanity, a new earth, a new creation. Liturgy and public worship, the Eucharist and the Sacraments will be powerful means to be used in this venture along with the preaching of the Gospel, witnessing to it by life and love.

The reported saying of Pius XI that the mission of the church is to get people to the Mass is ambiguous. So is the statement of Paul VI when he said that liturgy was not only the first subject treated in the second Vatican council, but ''the first in intrinsic worth and in importance in the life of the church''. (McNapsy, 1966: 133). The idea occurs in the council's document on worship: the liturgy is ''the summit towards which the activity of the church is directed; and the fountain from which all its power flows (SC 10). This clearly is a church-centred, even a liturgy-centred, concept, and the perspective is dualistic. The church seems to see itself ''as collective subject of a sacred history'' running parallel to or united to the world's secular history. For Medellin, ''the liturgical celebration crowns and nourishes a commitment to the human situation, to development and human promotion''. Beside being the climax of efforts for human promotion, liturgy is also seen as a pause on the road of history to grasp afresh and celebrate from time to time history's paschal and

eschatological depth-meaning (Avila: 73-74). Rafael Avila rightly observes that the ministry's decadence starts when it is clericalised and centred on performance of ritual. Volumes of ritual and minutiae of gestures with no clear meaning or vital message 'befuddles, befogs and blocks the celebration' (Avila: 79-80).

Authentic liturgies spring from and lead to commitment and struggle for justice, freedom and human dignity. In a world that is essentially political worship cannot be non-political and neutral. The only legitimate context of a Eucharist is an ecclesial community solidary with the efforts for liberation of the oppressed, the dalits, the women, the fisherfolk, the landless, the bonded, the tribals, the handicapped. Solidarity with the exploited would mean conflict with the exploiting class. But if the church is itself class-divided, the celebration of the Eucharist begins to bristle with problems. Is it possible for the Eucharist to be celebrated by persons "who are radically divergent in regard to their political designs?" And more basically, is it possible for the church to be composed of members whose political and caste interests are antagonistic? Participation at the same liturgy by persons of conflicting social classes has been possible only due to the anonymity that marks the composition of the assembly, and the reduction of the Eucharist to a shallow pious private practice with no historical responsibilities attached. Neutral liturgies are a prop for the status quo, and implicitly denies that Jesus was crucified, that his gospel is an explosive wine and the kingdom he brought is a challenging and transformative force.

The Eucharist is an intimately personal and communitarian sharing in the Human One's commitment unto death to the liberation of the downtrodden. It is the subversive memory of Jesus' passion, and our proclamation of his execution by the ruling class of his society. We remember, announce and celebrate in order to appropriate and live the meaning of his cross and to continue its historical thrust. We hold with Avila that "the only persons qualified to participate in this celebration are those working for liberation, and for suppression of objective conditions which make exploitation possible... Only those who accompany Christ in his work of the paschalization of society can truly participate." (Avila: 105). This may sound startling, but it is really nothing new. It is traditional to reserve the Eucharist for the baptized. That is, for those who have immersed themselves

in the cause of the Kingdom of justice, freedom and fellowship, and are ready to pay the price (cf Mk 10:35-45).

The Eucharist is an invitation and a challenge to share rice and bread, and the earth — that great bowl of rice God has filled for us, that large loaf of bread God has baked over the fire of his heart. A challenge to unmask and humanize the relations of production that lie beneath and within the bread we break or the rice and milk we share. An imperative to create human communities and structures of economics as if people mattered far more than profits. An incentive to our spirits to confront systems of exploitation and domination, to resist them and struggle for their dismantling and elimination. The Eucharist is an act of dissent from the status quo of oppression and ricelessness. A great gesture of protest by the Christ present in the people. An act of divine judgement, calling in question the entire empire of violence and established injustice, provoking a crisis for each of us and for the whole community, urging decision and option for God and against mammon, for liberation and against domination, for the people and against throned and armed might. Being our passover, the Eucharist is a celebration of our political struggle full of tough hope and tender trust in the liberator God. The story of Exodus makes it clear that the faith of Israel could not be celebrated in Egypt in the midst of oppression; the people had to move out into the space and freedom of the desert in order to eat and drink with/before their God. So it is with the Eucharist: it cannot be celebrated except in freedom, and as freedom, and as struggle for freedom and dignity and life for all.

The struggle continues. From there must all liturgy come to birth; there must all rituals define themselves. Bits and pieces, or even whole structures, lifted out of archeology do not constitute living celebrations. The earliest liturgies of the church were not academic creations. Not work of experts. They shaped up in the hands and hearts of common believers, in their generosity and love, in the context of confession and martyrdom, and of joyful proclamation of the word. They took form amidst honest efforts to realize an alternative social order responsive to the Christ event, to the Self-giving of God in the crucified and raised Jesus. It will not do for us to borrow or copy their

creations. Needed is a joyful and imaginative living of the radical gospel in our political and cultural context. Authentic liturgies will flower forth from there.

The Eucharist is primarily and basically a meal: food and drink given with the invitation, Eat, Drink. But an over-emphasis on its sacrificial aspect and mistaken notions of sacrifice have all but eclipsed in our land this basic truth about the sacrament. Day after day, week after week, thousands of people go to church 'to hear Mass', 'to see Mass', to participate in the 'sacrifice', but without sharing bread or rice together, without eating and drinking at the Lord's table. The invitation is there: take, eat, drink. But it is ignored, and declined. People look at the Lord's Supper and go away. There is here an essential dimension of worship reform and liturgical education which has yet to find its feet. It seems that the most ancient and quite widespread form of sacrificial worship consisted not in immolation of victims but in the communion of eating and drinking joyfully in God's presence. The Eucharist belongs with and within the tradition of Jesus' table fellowship with the outcast and the hungry, the indebted and the marginalised. It was in the course of a supper that he took some bread and said: take, eat, this is myself. The Eucharist continued to be part of a community meal, the Love Feast, for over a century, then it was celebrated at the end of a meal or at its beginning, and finally separated from common meals altogether. But it retains its basic character of food-sharing as symbol and sacrament of earth-sharing and resource-sharing in the great process of building the Kingdom-community on our earth. Exodus 24:9-11 is perhaps an example of a joyful meal with God, a holy communion of people in God. And the communion is coincident with sacrifice. And sacrifice is primarily God's activity of endowing, enriching and sanctifying us in order to enable us freely to be God's children and friends, co-working in God's project of transforming world history into God's kingdom.

III. St. Thomas

Two interesting miracle-stories or sign-stories are told of St. Thomas. One is that he came to some country in North India, identified himself as a builder, and undertook to construct a palace for the king who advanced the necessary funds. In time the king went to see the palace, and was surprised on being presented

with a multitude of the sick, the poor and the rejected of his kingdom. Thomas had gathered them and was spending the king's money in feeding, clothing them and providing basic amenities. He was a builder, indeed, a rebuilder of broken lives, a constructor of the poor into communities of sharing, and a man who pointed out to kings and ruling classes the way to become human, and cease to be camels.

The other story places Thomas in Keralam where he challenges brahmins to bid the water which they were throwing up as part of (sun) worship, remain suspended in the air. The brahmins fail in their attempt while Thomas performs the sign, wins admiration and a following.

The first story sounds more christianly authentic than the other. It is in line with the earthly signs Jesus used to give as against the heavenly signs the scribes used to demand; it tallies with Jesus' mission of bringing good news to the poor, giving the Kingdom to the dispossessed, practising table fellowship with outcasts: it chimes with Jesus' concern to construct the kingdom community of equals and friends who would love one another, wash one another's feet and share bread together. The story has distinct eucharistic echoes. The Eucharist is a place where the community realizes itself as the Body of Christ to be broken and given for the life of the world. The 'building story' about St. Thomas reflects the spirituality of the New Testament, and of Thomas in particular.

The Synoptic gospels mention Thomas, but it is the fourth gospel that helps us gain some insight into the man's personality. One might say that in general it is the tragic aspects of Jesus' life that Thomas' spirit registers best. On learning of Lazarus' sickness and death, Jesus decides to return to Judea where the jews were bent on killing him. Thomas then said to the company: "Let us also go and die with him". Solidarity with Jesus in his suffering and death marks Thomas' discipleship. The North Indian story is in tune with this side of his character. The next word we have from Thomas is protest against Jesus' suggestion to know the way to where Jesus was going. "We do not know where you are going", Thomas said, "how then could we know the way?" It is this peeved question that drew from Jesus the famous reassuring revelation, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life." (Jn 14: 4-6). It is this way to life, already shadowed by the Cross, that Thomas proposed in the missions he undertook.

The most significant scenes come after Jesus' resurrection. The tragic strain in Thomas' spirit comes out powerfully in his firm refusal to accept his codisciples' witness concerning Jesus' resurrection. "I will not believe unless, until, I touch and feel the wounds of the Crucified." Jesus accepts the challenge and invites the man to touch and believe. Was that enough to

overcome Thomas' resistance? or, did he proceed to touch the wounds of Jesus before he surrendered with his (now famous) 'My Lord and My God'? However that might be, Thomas' Resurrection-faith is bound up with and marked by the sight/touch of the wounds of the Crucified. That is why in the North Indian story Thomas relates primarily and naturally to the broken, the wounded, the victims, and rejects of a class-and-caste social order. It must be from among them that his first converts came. It must have been with them that he gave shape to his communities' first liturgies: the proclamation of the Death of the Lord through breaking of bread with and among the disinherited and the untouchables of Asia. It must have been through abiding contact with their passion that Thomas' own faith grew and continued to encounter his Lord and his God. This is the heritage we should guard or restore: it has the stark simplicity and authenticity of the Cross of Jesus.

The last time the New Testament mentions Thomas is in John 21. Thomas is in Galilee with Peter, James and John and two other disciples. All fishworkers. Peter announces his intention to go fishing. The others join him. When Thomas came to India did he not naturally choose to live with people of his profession and continue to ply his trade? It is likely then that his first converts came from the fishing villages where he (temporarily) settled and perhaps from among the Jewish settlers of the locality. Given his spirituality of the wounds of Christ and given his Master's clear option for the poor, and challenge to the ruling castes and classes, it is again likely that his apostolic ministry focused on the marginalized and exploited classes of the land, building them up into communities of dissent and resistance, and alternative dreams and life-styles.

That is one way we can understand Thomas' martyrdom. Who killed him, and why? Surely those whose power and privilege as well as caste and class elitism felt threatened and challenged by his message and by the subversive movement he was initiating among the exploited masses? And if the message and movement were subversive their symbolic celebration could not be otherwise. That subversive tradition coming alive amidst today's vaster and subtler injustices and crosses, can develop into a vibrant worship and a potent social ferment: provided, of course, that we do not want to domesticate Thomas' message of the cross, and do not want to erase the wounds in the Body of the Lord, and do not refuse to remain in daily contact with the wounds and tears of the crucified masses of our times.

IV. Concretely

In practice we should never cease to ask: Does our (Eucharistic) liturgy exert significant influence on the life of the

church, on the christian community, on their understanding and practice of politics and economics, on relationship to neighbours, and on our responsibility for a different and beautiful social order?

Does the Eucharistic celebration become a pressure upon our hearts to change and reach out for something larger and finer not only in our personal existence but in our corporate social-ecclesial life?

Do we realize that we are not only remembering the past but taking on responsibility for the present and the future of our earth and our history, and are committing ourselves in the Eucharist to a great and difficult task?

Could we as a church dare be free with the freedom of God's children, and go ahead designing liturgies and church structures that will be meaningful, beautiful and simple, demanding and challenging, as well as bound up with the history we are making and living with all our fellow citizens? — liturgies clear and powerful in their symbolism, evocative of the basics of the Gospel and the new humanity it promises, and throbbing with the sorrows and hopes of our times?

Are we clear in our minds that our Eucharist will be a celebration of radical liberation in process, and not of the people's hidden enslavement? that it will be memorial to inspire us to what we *can* do, and a prophecy to challenge us to attempt what appears impossible? and an imperative for our conscience to work ceaselessly to secure daily bread for all and a measure of human dignity? Are we determined to make our Eucharist a passage for everyone from conditions that are less human to those that are more human? make it a kind of prophetic crisis that will call in question the *status quo*, unmasking its sin and provoking profound change in thought and action? Shall we make it a celebration with clear words and real signs without its being barricades as it often is with extravagant rubrical hurdles and cluttered with a host of obscure gestures? a celebration that will unite people in commitment and joyful living and loving in the holy Spirit?

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